BUDDHISM IN POPULAR CULTURE

The Case of Sri Lankan "Tovil dance"



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Dissertation for the Degree of Ph.D.
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2009

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks:
To the Faculty of Social Sciences in Bergen for accepting me to their doctorate program
To the staff at NIAS in Copenhagen for their support in relation with my visit at theirs in 2001
To all of my Sri Lankan informants and dedicated assistants that enabled this work
To Prof. Ranjini Obeyesekere and Prof. Gananath Obeyesekere for their truly kind support and enlightening discussions in Sri Lanka

To Prof. Nicholas Thomas and the staff at the Institute of Anthropology at Goldsmiths College, UCL and at the Royal Anthropological Society for all help and support while in London during the spring term 2003

To the University College of Performance Arts in Oslo for facilitating me with an office in 2004
To my affiliations at Institute of Culture and Oriental Studies, UiO – for their encouragement and the teaching jobs
To the freelancers at Brenneriveien.com, for the soundtracks and moods of the everyday
To Miriam Edmunds for the wonderful layout
To Mr. Christopher Kennard at Anchor English.com. for correcting my awkward English

The sponsors:
The Norwegian Research Council
The University of Bergen
The Lauritz Meltzer Foundation
Atina AS

Personal thanks to:
Prof. Eldar Bråthen, Prof. Anka Bjelland, Prof. John Knudsen, Prof. Jan Peter Blom, Assistant Prof. Kathinka Frøystad, Prof. Øivind Fuglerud, Prof. Arild Engelsen Ruud, Prof. C.P. Zoller, Prof. Chris Wright, Prof. Arnd Schneider, Chief Administrator Pavla Jezkova, my supervisor throughout most of the process apart from the last years Prof. Bruce Kapferer

And

PhD *corruption fighter* Tone Sissener*, PhD to be forever young Javanese* Lars Gjelstad, PhD *sal(o)mon fisherman* Arne Cato Berg*,* PhD *migrant identity signifier* Cecilie Ødegård*,* Dean *hybrid artist* Paula Crabtree*, World explorer* Nicolay Pau*s, PhD to be world banker* Jon Harald Sande Lie*, PhD to be Aikido whiz* Håkon Fyn*, PhD to be monkess reincarnate* Iselin Frydenlund*,* PhD *cinnamon gardens politician* Morten Olesen*,* PhD *of the aksasa* Premakumara DeSilva*, PhD to be masculinity specialist* Thomas Walle*,* PhD *idealist SL specialist* Sunil Gunasekera, PhD *arts philosopher* Sabine Grossner*, Actionist* Artist Muhanned Cader*,* Justice *peace street art activist* Lisa Kois*,* PhD *anthropologist wanna be* Shamindra Herat*, The superintendent* Mohan *and his guardians* Naz *and* Dom*, Refugee saviour* Camilla Madsen *and* President Council Desmond Fernando*, The ambassador for all that is good* Solfrid Lien*, The save the children and save the world Hero* Markus Aksland *and The equality warrior* Ole Fredrik Einarsen*,*

The greatest thanks are dedicated to my lovely family and dear friends!

Hege Myrlund Larsen　　　　Oslo 01.10. 2009

I. INTRODUCTION

I.I The Scope and Ambition of the Thesis Defined

I.I.I. Contextualising the Empirical Scope of the Thesis – Buddhist Nationalism

The formation of the post-colonial national subjects in Sri Lanka is the result of a dialectical historical process that Sri Lanka shared with many other post-colonial/post-world war countries. As Seneviratne writes in relation with the role of religion in the emergence of novel nations throughout the last century: "As a rule, in new nations emerging from colonial rule, religious modernization was allied with nationalist resurgence. Far from being the cradle of a systemic rationality that embraced all institutions, religious modernity in these and similar cases became an ideological force that, in the extreme, as in some instances of Islamic resurgence, took fundamentalist and fanatical forms. Scripturalism, which could have under favourable circumstances channelled the society in the direction of rationalization and civility, here opened the path to the fetishization of religion, making it part of the arsenal of hegemonization" (1999: 15). What Seneviratne so well describes can be recognised in the Sri Lankan context as a situation where the doctrines of Buddhism, which encourage subjects to act in solidarity with each other and promote non-violence, are rules of morally highly esteemed social conduct that have often been broken by the local Buddhists in the post-colonial battle for power in the "new" Sri Lankan nation. The rise of "Buddhist nationalism" in Sri Lanka has been a heated topic of anthropologic discourse, particularly from the end of the 1980s onwards, with notable works by Stanley Tambiah; Buddhism Betrayed (1992), Bruce Kapferer; "Legends of People Myths of State" (1988), Gombrich and Obeyesekere; "Buddhism transformed" (1988), Seneviratne; "The work of kings" (1999) and with important contributions from Jonathan Spencer (2002, 1997, 1990a, 1990b), R.L Stirrat (1992). The central topic in these discourses is the social/political history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, contemporary features of Buddhist nationalism, and the role of monks in Sri Lankan politics. In Sri Lanka, nationalism comes with an ontological/religious dimension as the key political objective since independence has been the realisation of a Buddhist (Sinhalese) state (Kapferer, 1988), and it is correct to say that Buddhism is the hegemonic ontological-

ideology of the ruling ethnic religious majority – the Sinhalese. Seneviratne explains the position of Buddhism in Sri Lanka in the following way: "At the macro level the "Buddhist state" exhibits a historical tendency for the identification of Buddhism with the State, kingship, and the people. At the micro level the Buddhist monastery has played a role as a centre of education and culture" (1999: 16-17). The first dimension is of great concern to Tambiah (1992) and Kapferer (1988) as well as Seneviratne (1999) himself. The dimension addressing the distribution of Buddhist knowledge and the modern transformations thereof is thoroughly worked out by Gombrich and Obeyesekere (1988). Compared with India, a country whose history has been inseparable from Sri Lanka both in pre and post colonial times, the main difference between religious nationalism in Sri Lanka and India, is that in Sri Lanka caste communalism does not play a similar role in the formation of parties as described in discourses on Indian nationalism in work by scholars as Van der Veer (1994), Corbridge and Harris (2000) and Blom Hansen (1999). As Seneviratne points out, on the social level, Buddhism and its egalitarian core has contributed to a less hierarchical and rigid caste system and more equal status among men and women in Sri Lanka, than in, for instance, the South Indian region of Tamil-Nadu. The notion of caste is thus not as significant in the formation of Sri Lankan political parties as it is in India. However, the notion of regionalism is important to some extent in the Sri Lankan political context, as it is in neighbouring India. The history of the South Asian region is in short that of kingdoms ruling and falling, then of colonial powers ruling and falling, and in the most recent historical period, that of nation states evolving. The complexity of the socio-political structure and political culture in the region can just be understood in the light of the fact that there are communities formed on the structures of all these great "civilisation projects" living side by side and "competing" for social/political/religious/cultural and economic power in the contemporary society. In North-India for instance, communities formed on the basis of the social power structures of medieval Muslim sultanates are still operating and challenge the position of the Hindu majority (communities once formed on the model of Vedic kingdoms) and the ruling Hindu party (BJP) in many provinces – a battle that has led to many a violent clash between the communities. Similarly, in Sri Lanka there are ancient Hindu Tamil and Muslim settlements, communities formed on distinctive socio-cultural and religious systems. In the post-colonial creation of the Buddhist state period in Sri Lankan history, these ethnic communities became subjected to state discrimination; the Buddhist Sinhalese preference in

the state cultural policy (which I will address in chapter 6) particularly contributed to this subordinate position. By the end of the 1970s a Tamil guerrilla group was formed; the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a group fighting for political autonomy in the northern region of Sri Lanka. During my time of research, the battle between the Sri Lankan Government Army and the "Tamil Tigers" was still on and had developed into a fully fledged civil war.

The Buddhist nationalist movement in Sri Lanka forms a crucial backdrop for this work on contemporary employments of the (Buddhist) aesthetic regime of "Tovil dance" in "popular culture". The first ideas for this work developed from the discourses on Buddhist nationalism and its political and religious actors as addressed above. The works had a void as I found that all scholars had come to overlook, or at least ignore the great things happening in the field of "culture" in the historical period of grand social/political and economic change. The study of cultural production from the viewpoint of both religious and contemporary artists as well as public institutions for the development and preservation of cultural expressions required some work I believed, and thus this project took shape. The result became an honest, but still modest attempt, due to my capacity as a single researcher, to redesign the "field map" on cultural issues in the Sri Lankan context. In the thesis, I will in other words not address the social/political field of ethnic religious nationalism in Sri Lanka, nor discuss its religious contradictions or get into how religious ideography is reproduced in the social/political discourse and other popular trends in the current Buddhist nationalist debate. My empirical scope is set from another angle than the political; it is positioned within the centre of the production of the aesthetic expressions of Buddhist cultural worlds. The title of the thesis "Buddhism in Popular Culture, The case of Sri Lankan "Tovil dance", is thus illustrative of the focal position given Buddhist teachings, ethics and religious practice in the domain of cultural practice as carried out by the informants whose work instructs the thesis. Drawing on the sociologist John Fiske (1989), I view popular culture as (a set of) semiotic/aesthetic practices whose positioning is political, and which exists alongside forces/institutions of domination (Lewis, 2002: 32). I will elaborate on the analytical concepts of popular culture, public sphere and the popularisation of dance in chapter 1, and for now just state that "Tovil dance" is, as I will demonstrate through this

work, the cultural practice of the ethnic majority in Sri Lanka, a "hegemonic" aesthetic regime of the Buddhist Sinhalese.
Usually, anthropologists investigate questions concerning identity politics from the perspective of a social network or community embracing and engaging with cultural practices in their daily lives. My own work considers my subject from the angle of those professionally involved in the creation of "cultural productions" that communicate and shape social identities. At the core of this work is the exploration of the constitutive dialectics between an aesthetic practice such as "Tovil dance" and public institutions. The institutional and aesthetic dimensions of the field of cultural production works towards different phenomenal and pragmatic ends, but the fields are still constitutive for each other. To get to terms with these highly complex dimensions of the field became the key challenge of my work, and I will return to the solution that I came up with below under the heading of: "Analytical inspirations" and "Researching cultural policy". My key informants are chosen to enlighten the many features of this interrelationship and are primarily the Aduras (ritualists) of the "Tovil system". A "Yak Tovil" is an ancient Buddhist healing ritual. The Gammaduva, Deva Tovil and Gara Yakuma rites are Buddhist rites of health, wealth, prosperity and communion. The term "Tovil system" is just a way that I have chosen to conceptualise all kinds of rituals carried out by the Aduras as ceremonial masters, priests, artists, acrobats, drummers and dancers.

"Tovil dance", accompanied by drumming, is a central performance element in the ritual system and has through the centuries developed into a complex art form. In her book on: "Embodied Communities, dance tradition and change in Java", Felicia Hughes-Freeland (2008) demonstrates how courtly dance traditions in Indonesia in its present "phase" of development, form an embodied language through which social resistance is expressed. In this work I have conceptualised dance with the more general notion of it as an aesthetic regime and address the question of cultural change from the angle of cultural performance. The way that I have chosen to conceptualise dance is thus qualitatively different from Hughes-Freeland who has mastered Indonesian dance herself and who can thus pursue the perspective of a dancer and the dance community in her analysis. Her knowledge of the dance as practice helps shed light on aspects of "Tovil dance" which I have not covered in my own. Through her work she found that: "Dance helps us understand the relationship

between embodied and imagined communities, and between social control and conformity and personal freedom and self-realisation. It is because it is embodied that dance is a powerful political symbol…" and she continues: "Dance is more than an emblem, even when it is incorporated into the symbolism of the nation state. Dancing is embodied action which begins in the physical material body but does not end there. It goes beyond the material and the visible, to the domains of energies and forces, of language and of imagination" (Hughes-Freeland, 2008: 237). In this work I will draw on Hughes-Freeland's tripartite analytical conception of dance and distinguish between dance as an aesthetic technology that works through our senses, as a language of communication, and a media that fuels our imagination, and also consider how it does all this simultaneously.

An Adura is not just a ritualist of the "Tovil system", he is also a member of the drummer caste, the Bereva, the caste which has the birthright to carry out "Tovil work". In contemporary Sri Lanka, "Tovil dance" is a highly popular art form employed in very many sorts of cultural performances apart from Tovils, an art form practised by many others as well as the initiated ritualists of the "Tovil system". To explore social, political, cultural and aesthetic dimensions of the process that has created this situation is the key aim of this thesis. In addition to the Aduras I therefore have also carried out fieldwork and interviews with lecturers that teach "Tovil dance" at the Institute of Aesthetic Studies at Alfred Crescent in Colombo, and officers working on cultural programs at the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, the Department of Culture and the National Arts Council and others involved in the field of dance such as civil servants and professional artists.

I.I.II. The Empirical Scope of the Thesis

This thesis starts where the work that I carried out my major degree ended (Larsen, 1998). For my major I wrote a thesis where I explored in depth a single Tovil rite, Mahasona Samayama, a curing rite dealing with "traumas" experienced in relation with death. In the thesis I addressed theoretical questions concerning ritual efficacy and my ambition was greatly inspired by performance anthropology and the work by scholars such as Richard Schechner (1977, 1990), Victor Turner (1982, 1986, 1990) and Bruce Kapferer (1983, 1997) in particular. The major project was motivated by my interest in the aesthetic dynamics of "musical socialites", as for some years I had worked as an art director at a concert hall and

had become puzzled by the powerful emotional engagement of the audience at the venue, of the very peculiar "moods of being" aroused through the media of music. In the proposal for the PHD, my interest had however changed to the question of how public cultural programs contribute to the development of arts and culture, an interest directly connected with my job as a cultural adviser at the Norwegian Development Aid Cooperation and at the Norwegian Arts Council. A small group of intellectuals interested in aesthetic practices has been active in Sri Lanka, and my work has been inspired by the work on theatre by Ranjini Obeyesekere (1999, 1992, 1990), on Tamil poetry by Valentine Daniel (1993), on dance by deZoete (1957) – and later Marianne Nurnberger (1998) and Susan Reed (2002, 1998) – and conversations concerning their studies on contemporary arts with Sunil Gunasekera and Sabine Grossner as well as Morten Olesen who carried out some work on war monumentalism. This was because their works bring attention to the vivid popular arts scene inspired by modern art practices in fusion with the rich local pool of cultural heritage in Sri Lanka – both tangible as intangible. The cases that I have chosen to present here are selected due to their capacity of documenting my findings that the "Tovil system" and "Tovil dance" in particular experienced dramatic changes throughout the end of the last century. In order to contextualise the position of Tovils in the sphere of religious popular culture I present in a "museal" fashion glimpses of many different aesthetic expressions of religious worlds in the Sri Lankan context. In chapter 3 I move into the field of contemporary theatre where I came across a theatre play, "the Ritual", created by Centre Stage Productions, which takes as its subject the "lifeworld" of the "Tovil system" and in which the director makes use of "Tovil dance" as a performance element in the production. Then I move to the "heart" of the "Tovil system" and in chapter 4 I contextualise the documentation of a Tovil ritual securing safe delivery of children, the Rata Yakuma, by looking into the cosmology of the rite and related ritual practices such as the ancient puberty rite: "The big girl become". Next there follows a presentation of the "Rata Yakuma" ritual where due to the analytical ambition of the thesis I focus on the aesthetic aspect of the ritual concept deployed.

It is my view that the "post-colonial" cultural policy programs of the ruling parties have played a part in the recent transformations that have taken place in regard to the "Tovil system" – most clearly so since the beginning of the 1990s. Throughout the last chapters of this work I therefore set out to demonstrate how this has happened through my presentation

of the cultural policies and public bodies influencing recent developments in the field of dance and by exploring the features of "modern transformations" of the "Tovil system". As an introduction to the field of cultural policy I also present two important cases which link the "Tovil system" with the field of power politics in a highly illustrative manner. These are the case of the preliminary ritual for the first National Dance Festival and the celebration of the Minister of Culture.

The work of imagination in the constitution of lifeworlds and social subjects has been emphasised by many anthropologists since the "semiotic" turn in the discipline (Singer, 1984). In my understanding, culture concerns a great variety of aspects of our realities such as: knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. In line with this position, the complex ideography of the Buddhists in Sri Lanka forms in my understanding a genuine field of vision and directs social actions. My view finds support in an article by Hughes-Freeland where she makes an interesting reference to Goodman's work on "Worldmaking" (1978). Goodman, whose philosophical position can be conceptualised as constructivist, approaches the study of art (or dance as in this case): "as a relativizing study of the constructions of realities ("versions") and "the comparative study of these versions and visions of their making". (Hughes-Freeland 1997a: 473). This constructivist and relativist position is relevant for this work as it addresses the temporary and multiple aspect of arts/dance in its becoming, presence and influence. The stress given by Hughes-Freeland on the dynamic, arbitrary features to the signification of all aesthetic works is echoed by Castoriadis, a social philosopher with an ontological position that each society "becomes" with its modes of creating a world of its own (Edgar and Sedgwick, 2002). As he says: "Art does not discover, it constitutes, and the relation between what it constitutes and the 'real", an exceedingly complex relation to be sure, is not a relation of verification" (Castoriadis, 1998: 133). To study a ritual system such as the Tovils or contemporary employments of an aesthetic regime such as "Tovil dance" is in other words not just a study in imaginary fiction but also of the lived-in realities of the communities that engage in these practices. To study a system such as the Tovils gains support from Marcus (Moore, 2004: 77), who recommends that the anthropologist should follow an: "ambition of representing something of the operation of the system itself rather than to demonstrate continually and habitually in the spirit of pluralism, the power of local

culture over global forces of apparent homogenisation". Taking the advice of Marcus seriously, the aim of this work is narrowed down to the exploration of the constitutive dynamics of the operation of the "Tovil system" itself – its contemporary "employments" and "position" in the field of Buddhist popular culture. The guiding questions for this thesis were developed from this position and are: *What is it about "Tovil dance" as an art form, the Aduras as "ritualists" and "artists", and the conceptual and aesthetic compositional structure of the "Tovil system" and its power dimension that enables such a successful mediation between the multiple arenas of performance of "Tovil dance", and that has allowed the ritual practice to continue through millennia, unaffected by the vicissitudes of history?*

I.II A Short Introduction to Theravada Buddhism

I.II.I. Power, Religion and Arts

Long before the takeover of its first Buddhist king, the people of the Lankan island were under royal patronage, and throughout history, both Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms have evolved there. Kingdoms dissolved through time, or were conquered by competing kings expanding their territories. With the many Indian kings, came artists and artisans doing service at court and at royal religious ceremonies – ceremonies of benefit for all. As payment for their services the king provided land and goods to cover their basic needs. Despite its unsteady past in regard to the borders of polities, its people, leaders and (religious) arts: "The rulers of the country were bound by the tenets and conventions of royalty to lend their support to Buddhism, and take such measures as were necessary for its protection and propagation. Buddhism, on the other hand, determined the aims of artistic creation and functioned as the common link among the ruler (sponsor), the artist (creator) and the public (recipient). There was among them a clear identification of sentiment. The services of the artists were services rendered towards achieving the basic principles and objectives of the State's role in the religious sphere. In return for his services, the artist received all the rights and privileges of society that were due to him, including his very means of livelihood". H.H. Bandara (1970: 10). The relationship between arts, religion and central power (social organisation) in cultural production has, in other words, a long tradition on the Sri Lankan island. In chapters 6 and 7 I address some contemporary features of this ancient inter-

relationship. It is now my aim to give a short introduction to the history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, to some of the most important doctrinal teachings, and to the significant features of the Buddhist pantheon. Then follows a short introduction of the interrelation between the pantheon, social organisation and ritual service before I present some notes on the difference between ritual practices serving worldly (laukika) and other worldly (lokottara) ends. Lastly, I give a short introduction to the most common iconic representations of the Buddhist religion.

I.II.II. The Mythological Origin of Buddhism in Sri Lanka

The mythological ancestor of the Sinhalese, Vijaya, came to Sri Lanka on the same day as Buddha passed into Nirvana. The legend (Mahavamsa) tells that the last thing Lord Buddha said before he died was: "Vijaya, son of king Sihabahu, is come to Lanka from the country of Lala, together with seven hundred followers. In Lanka, O lord of gods, will my religion be established, therefore carefully protect him with his followers and Lanka" (Aksland, 1990: 4-5). In other words, Vijaya with his followers were sent by Buddha to Sri Lanka in order to establish the Buddhist religion, under the protection of Sakra, the lord of gods. The legend further tells us that Vijaya marries a female yaka (a Sri Lankan aboriginal girl), by whom he has a son and a daughter. Vijaya later marries a princess from MAdurai in South India, and abandons his yaka wife and two children. The female yaka gets killed by her own people, but her children hide on Adam's peak, a holy mountain on Sri Lanka. The boy marries his sister when they grow up, and they become the ancestors of the Pulinda-tribe. Vijaya becomes a benevolent ruler, and reigns for 38 years. (Aksland, 1990).

This myth refers to three important historical facts from the island's history. Firstly it tells us that the ancestors of the population referred to as Sinhalese came from the northern part of India. Moreover Vijaya marries a South Indian lady, which again refers to the important cultural connections between Sri Lanka and Southern India. Another consequence of this migration between the countries is the development of two commonly used languages, Sinhala and Tamil, today distinguishing the two main "ethnic groups" of the country. Secondly the myth refers to the aboriginal population of Sri Lanka: "Vijaya marries a female yaka" (Ibid.). Yaka and Naga are terms referring to people who worshipped spirits given these names. In other words the ancient Sri Lankan folk belief was that of believing in

Yakku (plural for Yaka) and Nagas. The "Tovil system" deals with the worldly influence of Yakku. The Veddhas, tribesmen of the forestry of central and south eastern region of Lanka are, according to the Seligmans (1911), culturally distinguishable groups that descend from pre-Buddhist settlements in Sri Lanka, those known to worship Yakas and Nagas. The difference in religious and ritual practices of the ethnic- religious groups in Lanka are many, and according to Hochart the yaka worshipped by the (Buddhist) Sinhalese and the Veddhas differs in the way that the former has the character of a "demon" while the latter is a general term for the spirits of the dead. As he says: "Before we knew this we could not help suspecting that the yakshas of Brahmanic and Buddhist literature were originally spirits of the dead: they haunt cemeteries and generally play the same part as spirits of the dead play in countries further east whose culture is certainly akin to the archaic culture of India" Hochart, (1952: 8-9). Moreover Hochart informs us that in "India" a "yaksha" is regarded as one of many forms it is possible to be reborn into. Among the Buddhist Sinhalese the ghost or Preta (departed) shares the character of the "Indian" "yaksha", and is a form of after-death condition, a spirit that is unable to leave its loved ones (I. Nabokov, 2000). Thirdly this myth foresees the mythological conversion from folk belief to Buddhism, which according to the legend (Mahavamsa) took place when Asoka was the emperor of India, during the years 250-210 BC. This was the time when Asoka's son Mahinda came to Sri Lanka and converted the ruling emperor Devanampiya Tissa to Buddhism (K.M. De Silva, 1981: 9).

I.II.III. The Triple Gem and the Noble Truths of Buddhism

In its "early years" (Buddha's began in 456 BC) Theravada Buddhism was popular in South West India and Sri Lanka and is today the "state" religion of Sri Lanka, Laos, Burma and Thailand. Before the ruling days of the communist Khmer Rouge, it was also the religion of the people of Cambodia. In Richard Gombrich's introductory work on Theravada Buddhism (1988) it is stated that Buddhism was founded on the teachings of Gotama Buddha (Gotama, the enlightened one), a former North Indian king with spiritual aspirations. Gotama is not perceived as the first Buddha. He is just the first Buddha who stayed in his human form after receiving enlightenment – the goal of Buddhist meditation – and shared his insights with others. In some traditions he is also named Siddhatta. Gotama Buddha's teachings, Dhamma, are based on what he classified as the realisation of truth. The Sangha are an order of monks protecting, practising and promoting Gotama Buddha's ways of

reliving the truths about human worldly existence. The trinity of Buddha the enlightened, his teachings (Dhamma) and the Buddhist order (Sangha) forms the "triple gem" or "the three refugees" of the religion. The goal of Buddhist meditation is to conquer suffering because in the Buddhist view life is suffering first and foremost, but also to be mentally capable of seeing through all the illusions, to see the world as it truly is, to achieve enlightenment (nirvana). The state of enlightenment enables transcendence from the continuous cycle of rebirths which the living are subjected to, to transcend the worldly (laukika), to the other worldly (lokottara). Gombrich (1988: 24) says: "To conceive liberation (one has to achieve)… total eradication of greed, hatred and delusion". These conditions are also, according to Ames (1964) the most important karmic unwholesome mental states for a Buddhist to conquer. Ames (Ibid.) also addresses the four noble truths of Buddhism. These are: all life is suffering (duka), suffering arises through ignorant craving (duka) or attachment (loba), this suffering can be eliminated through cessation of craving (nirhoda) and cessation is achieved through following the noble eightfold path. This path – right view, right intention and right speech or right action etc – instructs the precepts of Buddhism. There are many precepts in Buddhism, and the more that you observe on a daily basis, the more disciplined you are the more "mentally conditioned" you become for the completion of the Buddhist goals. It is believed that it is only through the "long process of mental self-purification", meditation, that a Buddhist achieves his goals (Ames, 1962: 25). Ideally every Buddhist observes the five basic precepts (pansil):

1. Not to take life
2. Not to take what is not given
3. Not to lie
4. Not to misuse the senses and
5. To abstain from the use of alcohol and drugs.

And the observance of the eight precepts (atasil) on full moon days or in relation to cyclic rituals adds the rules of:

6. Abstaining from solid food after midday
7. Abstaining from dancing, singing, music and improper shows and wearing garlands and scents
8. Abstaining from the use of comfortable beds or chairs

Many more precepts (sils) than these basic eight are observed on a daily basis by the monks of the Sangha.

I.II.IV. Hierarchy of Karmic Excellence – the Buddhist Pantheon

Gunasekera (1994: 87) sketched out the Buddhist hierarchy on the basis of how close the various beings are perceived to be to worldly (laukika) transcendence (to lokottara). For instance, Natha, the guardian god of the western province, is thought to be the next Buddha due to his "karmic excellence". Below follows my own design on his model.

Lokottara
– Lord Buddha

Laukika
– Sakra, the lord of gods
– Lankapalas (guardian deities) i.e.; Pattini, Natha, Saman, Vishnu, Katarangama
– Devayas (deities) i.e.; Gana deva, Kali Amma, Devol Devi, Pattini
– Devatas, Bandaras (demon/gods) i.e.; Suniyam, Dadimunda
– Gama devayas (village deities) i.e.; Laksmi
– HUMANS
– Rakse (demons) i.e.; Naga rakse
– Yakku (demons) i.e.; Mahasona, Riri Yaka, Sanni Yaka, Kalu Kumare
– Buthe (earth spirits) i.e.; Mahikante, Prthivi
– Prete (ghosts)
– Pitte pantie (spirits outside domestic ground)

This model of the pantheon does not include the Graha devis, the planet gods. Astrology is nonetheless essential for most people in Sri Lanka as fortunate and unfortunate planetary moments are closely observed and directly affect social, political as well as religious actions. The "Bali Tovil", which is an extensive rite to the honour of the Graha devis, is solidly documented by Premakumare deSilva (2000). In fact the worship of the sun and the moon, the planets, and the light (deva) are basic concepts in "South Asian religions". In regard to Buddhism, the direction of Tantra vidiya affects the interrelation between the planets, the body and "mental conditions" most explicitly (O.Hinze, 1981).

In the Buddhist pantheon Lord Buddha is the overlord. Lord Buddha was reborn beyond this world centuries ago, but still the powers of his teachings and Jataka stories, stories about his deeds on earth, prevail in this world (G. Obeyesekere, 1984). This belief, that Buddha still has influence in this world, is essential for our understanding of the Buddhist religious practice. Before leaving this world Lord Buddha gave the varanan (warrant, permission) to the god Sakra to look after Sri Lanka. In this way Sakra became the lord of the gods, of every being of the Sri Lankan pantheon. Sakra represents Buddha's power in this world. G. Obeyesekere (1984: 54) says: "Gods, like kings, have areas of jurisdiction and divine authority over people within a physical area or territory". The supernaturals' powers are territorial and the more domestic their areas of jurisdiction, the lower the supernaturals are ranked in the hierarchy of karmic excellence. Further, Aksland (1990) notes that just as the Buddhist cosmology has four guardian gods (hatara varanam devis) of the four continents, Sinhalese cosmology also has four guardian gods of Sri Lanka. What both these scholars refer to are the gods named Natha, Saman, Vishnu and Katarangama[1] who are collectively called Lankapalas. For instance in the southern area of Sri Lanka where I worked, the god Vishnu is "in charge" and protects the region as the "varanam devis". The Buddhist pantheon is dense, complex and it employs an uncountable number of supernaturals. The principle of varanam is however an important mediating feature of the system, and all beings have to obey the demands of their superiors when asked to. The Aduras, as priests for instance, are given the "varanam" by Vesamuni – the chief of Yakku, to "control" the Yakku (Larsen, 1998). The Yakku for their part bring dosa, illness and misfortune on humans who in one way or another have got into a condition of substantial impurity which is a condition craved by the Yakku. The Yakku spot these humans (they always come in crowds) and cast their impure glance, "disti" on their 'victims". Consequently the human body becomes even more impure and falls sick. For the aturea (patient) to be cured, Adura are called into service. In short, by the means of ritual actions the Adura purifies the "patient's" (aturea's) body, carries out a transaction (offerings) between the Yakku and the "aturea" and "commands"

[1] As noted by Aksland (1990), who the four guardian deities are, differs with time and place. The gods' powers and influence changes through the centuries, due to their popularity and powers. (Obeyesekere, 1984) These names of the guardian gods are those suggested by Kapferer (1983).

the Yakku to go back to their rightful domain in the hierarchy of spheres of this world – laukika.

In general, the beings of the Buddhist pantheon can in the "semiotic world", be read as "symbolic types" for different karmic wholesome or unwholesome states of being. For instance the Preta, a common South Asian concept of people reborn as ghosts, is pictured as a skinny skeleton with an enormous belly. The word Preta itself carries the meaning of departure and passing away. As J. Davy reports: Preta "have a desire for food and drink, but in attempting to satisfy their appetite they are always tantalised, – their food and drink flying before them" (Ibid., 1821: 200). Those captured in this in-between state as a Preta exist in the so-called Gandambeya, in a state of "pure consciousness". The Preta are materialised in the element of air and are thus capable of "travelling" through air – and in the human world a "Preta" creates what I perceive as "poltergeist" phenomena. A swollen belly is often a sign of long time starvation, an extended period of unfulfilled needs and desires, or as a Buddhist might say, cravings. Craving, tanha (general) or dolla (craving of the pregnant or malevolent spirits), is one of the feelings Buddhists learn to control by the mind. It is one of the sources of emotion, or a sense of urgency that we experience as humans; it is misery of the present rooted in the search for food.[2] In other words, the ancestors that have died with unsatisfied desires can be temporarily "trapped" in a ghostlike state of being. The "Tovil system" includes a special offering rite: Preta pideni, for their treatment.

I.II.V. The Hierarchy of Castes and the Distribution of Ritual Service

Lankan religion and its hierarchical (mandala) system of jurisdiction (varanam) held by gods over cosmic territories serves as model of and for the social organisation of (vedic) Lankan kingdoms (Obeyesekere, 1984). Today, entwined with the contemporary formation of modern classes, the caste system of ancient kingdoms, the feudal structures of village plots and colonial administration/state bureaucracy are operative in the formation of local community, the constitution of the hierarchy of political, professional and social networks. Through history the distinguishable castes (guilds) formed in accordance with the sort of

[2] Samvega-vattu: Are eight in kind: birth, old age, disease, death, being, the suffering in the lower states of existence, the misery of the past rooted in the cycle of rebirth and the misery of the present rooted in the search for food. (Nyantiloka, 1952: 189)

ritual services the group carried out in both royal as well as domestic rites. One caste was the blacksmiths whose duty it was to provide ornamental goods; another, the gold and silversmiths who made jewellery; the potter clan made fresh pots, the washer clan provided purified and fresh clothes, and the drummer caste had the duty of playing music and dancing, but also of providing decorations as sculptures and paintings to temples and for ritual occasions. The borders of ancient polities frame the contemporary public "cultural regions" of Sri Lanka whereas the up-country (Kandy/Nuwara), Saburugamuwa, Ratnapura, Bentara and Galle/Matara are the most distinguished. My own work concerns the Galle/Matara tradition; the low-country dance-tradition.

Another distinguishing factor between the castes apart from their skills and craftsmanship was the nature of the supernaturals which the castes provided ritual offerings for. The gods as well as humans are ranked in regard to "substantial" purity and "karmic wholesomeness" – and the nature of the supernaturals offered to, or the degree of purity or pollution associated with the ritual duties (rites in relation to death, puberty, marriage, birth, housewarming etc.) carried out, defined the status of the caste. Consequently, among the Lankan Buddhist Sinhalese there is a hierarchy of priests which mirrors the hierarchy of the Buddhist pantheon. In this "ideal" model the Bhikku – monks that represent the Buddhist doctrine – are on top (with a caste status distinguished by the colour of their robes), then follow the Kapuralas (often of the fishermen or farmer caste) who carry out offerings for the devas (gods) and lead in village harvesting or fishing luck rituals. The Bereva (drummers) provide the offerings of sound and dance in almost any sort of rite at temples, village rites, death ceremonies etc. as it has long been a caste duty to do so, and they are given a low social status. The drummers who perform at the temple contribute to the ritual services, but their caste status prevents them being related to the sacred. Hocart, referred to in Seneviratne (1978), asked his informants why the high caste men did not drum themselves? And the answer given was: "only a drummer by caste can drum ritually: no other person's drumming is "real" and meaningful. At the Temple no meaningless drumming is possible. "Reality" or meaningfulness in drumming does not belong to the quality of the drumming, but to the quality of the drummer, i.e., his caste status." (Seneviratne, 1978: 27).

The Tovils are curing rituals dealing with the interference of and illnesses caused by lower supernaturals of the pantheon as the Yakku (demons), Devatas (demon/gods), Preteas

(ghosts) and Buthe (earth spirits) in the human world. In relation with the temple festival rites (Deva Tovil) village harvesting (Gamaduva rites) and fishing luck rites (Gara Yakuma), the Kapuralas and Aduras collaborate. The Bereva Aduras are however not the lowest on the status ladder of local ritualists. It is the rodiyas (outcasts) that deal with the most impure and lowest spirits of them all: the "Pitte Pantiyas". In other words: common cultural (religious) idioms and local social hierarchy are in accordance with the pre-colonial, Vedic god/king civilisation system of South Asia, constituted through religious practice. The central powers took on the role as patrons of the (religious) arts. Moreover, each polity promoted and developed religious cults, public ceremonies, and ritual traditions. The ranking of religious cults and the social groups connected with the cults within a polity was established on the basis of the notion of moral conduct in Buddhist terms (lokottara matters) and (substantial) ritual purity (laukika matters). The Bereva as drummers (at any ceremony) and priests in the "Tovil system" play a central role in the ritual traditions of Sri Lanka.

I.II.VI. Buddhist Ritual Practice

Sri Lankan Buddhist ritual practice works towards two goals. One is thought to lead to transcendence from this world, and the other leads to a more beneficial life in this world. Rituals are differentiated on orientation of religious actions, where the "purer" Buddhist lokottara-oriented practices are regarded as having more merit (pinkama) and distinguished by their "mentally enhancing aspects and ends" whereas the laukika-oriented ones serve pragmatic ends and their most significant concept of distinction centre on the notion of "substantial" purity and impurity, and the rites work towards the goal of purification, and not Buddhist mental aspirations. These practices are not easy to separate from each other since a beneficial life in this world (laukika) makes it easier to perform good deeds and again gain merit in order to transcend this world (to lokottara) (Holt 1991). In Sri Lanka one therefore also often finds "mixed" temple grounds where images of Buddha and gods are placed side by side and where Buddhist monks (Bhikkus) and priests mediating between gods and humans (Kapuralas) are at "work". The Buddhist monks nonetheless mainly deal with religious practices influencing the transcendence to lokottara. Agama – practices that enable transcendence work through the ritual actions of bhavanaya (meditation) first and foremost but the "pin kama" also aspire to the "pin kama"/agama category. These are merits bringing actions such as "dana" (almsgiving) and "pirith" (recitation/meditation on Buddhist

teachings). In Ames' findings the rites of the "Tovil system" are purely laukika-oriented as the Aduras and the Kapuralas deal with "mundane matters" – with physical conditions of humans and their material worldly existence (in laukika).

I.II.VII. Buddhist Iconography

In regard to the aim of this work, to explore Buddhism in popular culture, I will lastly mention that the most common icons of the religion apart from the image of Buddha experiencing various mental states, are the Bo tree under which he gained enlightenment, the lotus flower out of which he was born and which is the symbol for the pure state of enlightenment, the (dharma) wheel (the "wheel of eternal returns") which stands for the eightfold path towards enlightenment, and the Stupa/dagoba, which are Buddhist places of worship originally put up to protect relics and remedies of Buddha. In Sri Lanka such important relics are his tooth kept in the temple at Kandy, and his footprint at the top of the sacred mountain, Sri Pada/Adams Peak.

Another important symbol for Buddhism is the moon. (The sun is iconic for royalty). The monthly full moon day, poya, is a national holiday in Sri Lanka reserved for observance of Buddhist precepts (pan sil and ata sil) and to repeat or learn the verse forms (Buddha gatas) of the many proficient sayings of Buddha. The hare that is printed on the moon is also a "summary symbol" for Buddhism as a 'state religion", not just the image of Buddha in one of his many births, as I will discuss soon. The Jataka stories of the life and deeds of Buddha play a significant role in the constitution of the Buddhist ethos among the people as they are illustrative of righteous moral conduct and action and are far more accessible than the complex teachings on metaphysics and meditative practice. The stories are also illustrative of how the actual powers of a Bodhisatta work, how they are to be recognised. As the Jataka Story No 316 goes, (Ed E.W.Cowell, 2000), Sakra (the god protecting Buddhism in Sri Lanka) put the virtue of Buddha, once born as a hare, to the test on a full moon day, a day suitable for almsgiving, among other noble deeds. When the day arrived the Bodhisatta (Buddha to be in his next birth), the hare and his friends were all well prepared to fast and were ready with alms to give to beggars if asked. However, the hare was out of rice and oil, and said to his friends that he could not kill any creature so his sacrifice had to be himself. His words were so powerful that they "shook" the air at Sakra's dwelling place. When he

understood the words causing the vibrations in his world, he was moved by the noble aim declared, and decided to put the hare to a test. So the following day, in the disguise of a Brahmin, Sakra appeared before the noble hare. And as the Bodhisatta hare had told his friends, when asked by the Brahmin for alms he generously offered himself and Sakka accepted his wish. He then made a pyre and the Bodhisatta threw himself into the flames. However, the hare did not die because Sakra had cooled the heat of the flames, and to the hare he said: "Oh wise hare, be thy virtue known throughout a whole æon" (Ibid: 37). Sakra squeezed out some essence from the mountain, and with the essence he daubed the sign of a hare on the orb of the moon. And so ended the story of how the image of a hare/Buddha appeared on the moon. The ideography/ iconography of Buddhism is rich and varied and some of its expressions to be examined more closely in chapter 1.

I.III Researching the "Tovil system"

I.III.I. Existing Works and Analytical Scope

By taking the Tovils as the point of reference for my research, I join a long lineage of anthropological studies to which the Seligmans (1911), Perthold (1930), Paul Wirz (1954), G. Obeyesekere (1969, 1984), Kapferer (1983, 1997), David Scott (1994) and DeSilva (2000) in my view, have made the most influential contributions. I nonetheless regard Hildburgh (1908) as the earliest ethnographer working on rituals in Sri Lanka and his texts on magical practice in Ceylon are packed with enlightening ethnographic details. The record of John Davy from 1821 is also very informative regarding the religious beliefs of the Singhalese. Hugh Nevill (1955) was a trained indiologist working in Ceylon for the British colonial powers, and his work is perhaps the most fruitful one in a historical perspective. Nevill collected ritual texts, many from the Dondra region and investigated their year of composition and their relation with wider South Asian literate traditions. His collection included about 900 texts. The Seligmans (1911) worked in the hill-country with tribal veddhas, and recorded their vivid customs and cosmology in which the worship of the Yakas has a central place. The work of Paul Wirz (1954) became crucially important for my own research as it provided me with very solid ethnographic details about the "Tovil system". However, Gananath Obeyesekere (1969, 1984, 1991, 1993, 1967), stands in a class of his

own. His knowledge of Sri Lankan history, religion, ritual and social/political issues is invaluable. Ranjini Obeyesekere's (1999, 1992, 1990) work has nonetheless been a greater inspiration to my own work as I share her interest in Buddhism, women, arts, literature and theatre. Moreover, Marianne Nurberger (1998) with her book 'Dance is the language of gods' on the development of modern stage dance in Sri Lanka, and Susan Reed (1998, 2002) on Kandyan dance, and the activities of the cultural centre in Kandy have provided much information for my work. Bruce Kapferer (1983, 1997) has written two books and a great number of articles on the Tovils, and with these has made a great contribution to the anthropological study of performance and rituals, and greatly inspired my own work. David Scott (1994) should also be mentioned as he has recorded an important rite: the Ira Modum Samayama, and so should Premakumara DeSilva (2000) for his work on the Bali Tovils. Significant contributions published in Sinhala have been made by lecturers at the University of Keleniya, and I single out: Tissakariyawasam, Jayasena Kottagoda, Mudiyanse Dissanayake – and Lionel Bentage. One field that caught my attention as "under studied" in regard to the "Tovil studies tradition", and which therefore makes important empirical contributions is a documentation and analysis of the Rata Yakuma – one of the grand rituals which are performed in relation with pregnancy.

I.III.II. The "Tovil system" and its Conceptual Ideography

To study Tovils invites the exploration of a great range of theoretical concepts, and highly sophisticated theories of metaphysics, psychology and magico-religious medicine in their "own right". I have already mentioned the importance of the hierarchy of the Buddhist pantheon – the power of Buddha's truths and the ritual system as a means of reordering of a balanced cosmos and I will here address some other influences of importance, and with the aim of clarification, I will look into some of the aesthetic, religious, medical and social concepts involved in the rites. I bring these facts to attention here to demonstrate how the "Tovil system" is a dynamic system – a true "hybrid" in regard to origins and influences from a great variety of cults, knowledge practices and aesthetic designs that through centuries have formed the system. The "Tovil system" developed in dialectical relation with other ritual performance traditions in South Asia, and the widespread use of Sanskrit terminology by the artists in the region links these systems even more closely together. For instance the literature theory of the Sanskrit theatre traditions, the theory and practice of

Indian dance drama (bharata natyam), the Kathakali dance drama complex from Kerela, as well as the many Buddhist "court art practices" such as the Noh Theatre of Japan, I find by experience useful for comparison in relation to the study of the system as an "aesthetic regime". ((Richmond/Swann/Zarilli, (1990), Blackburn, (1996), Baumer/Brandon, (1981)).

In the basic ritual designs, the Tantric influence is significant and the offerings are designed on the principles of the yantra (form) and the charms of invocation mantra (sound) (Khanna, 1979). The Atharva vedha (1996) – one of the four "original" texts of the "Vedic" religion, inspires important offering acts in the system named "sirisipade", ritual actions that purify the patient's body from head to foot (Thite, 1982). The Suniyama rite deals with the unfortunate powers of "vas dos" – sorcery. In the Buddhist pantheon Suniyam is perceived as a "sorcery demon-god". The rite is highly sophisticated in its design, and the key procedure is the "hata diya" the seven steps. Central for the meditation practice of the Buddhist "Tantra vidiya" as described by O. Hinze (1981), is the concept of "hata diya" and its yantra/mantra meditation composition. A similar theme is found in the Natyasumangali ritual in Tamil Nadu (Kersenboom-Story, 1987). The Suniyama ritual is also referred to by the southern Aduras as the "key" ritual of the "Tovil system" and the "origin" of the system and all of its "tools" (see Larsen, 1998) is given in the creation myths recited throughout the rite. However, the Kohomba Kankariya ritual of the "up-country tradition", is another rite originating with the system, and the pantheon of the rite is evidently more "ancient" in the Sri Lankan religious history than the pantheon of the Suniyama (Nurnberger, 1998). In the up-country the psychological theories of the Abhidhamma (a key work in Buddhist psychology) guided the practice of an Adura. The theory and its influence on his curing practice is explored in the study by Beatrice Vogt: "Skills and Trust" (1998). Moreover, if one follows Ling's (1962) work on Buddhism which demonstrates how its doctrine evolved in a dialectical relationship to "demon cults", the Tovils are a practice which sets out to break the illusions[3] created by demons (maya). This is a point elaborated on in Kapferer's work "A celebration of demons" (1983). Incorporated into the practice of the "Aduras" as well as into the Tovils, is also the Ajurvedic medicine system, involving the science of humour balance, the principles of cooling, heating and balanced substances and plant

[3] To enable people to see through illusions is also an aspect of the art form of dance, as mentioned by Coomeraswamy in his book on the dance of Shiva (1924).

medicine. The offering diet to the supernaturals is always considered as "heating" or "cooling", substantially pure or impure. The Yakku for instance, gets a diet of liquor and fried food, which is a heating and impure diet. The atureas, the patients of the system, always get a diet to follow as a part of their healing process prescribed by the Aduras. However, the link between the Ajuurvedic medicine system and the "Tovil system" is yet to be closely reviewed. There is, in other words, evidence that a great number of religious, aesthetical and medical systems have influenced the creation of what I have conceptualised as the "Tovil system".

When it comes to the conceptual differences between the many rituals of the system these mainly concern the ends the rites set out to achieve, but an interesting distinction is the differences in the social worlds that model the ritual ideography of the rites. In his work on the Suniyama ritual, Bruce Kapferer (1997) uses the concepts of power that are the subject of the rite, as a general theory of state and war. Other important concepts at play in the ritual system of the Tovils are for instance the 18 (avataras) manifestations of mental illnesses portrayed by the "Sanni Yaka" in the Sanni Yakuma ritual. The Sanni Yakuma is a rite that was thoroughly investigated by G. Obeyesekere (1967) who established through his investigations of South Indian psychology a link between the rite and the Cola dynasty in South India. The Tovil ritual for the Sanni Yaka, from which this masquerade "originates", is suggested by Kapferer to take the household as its thematic reference. The Mahasona Samayama rite for the cemetery demon, concerns ideas related with death, "death pollution" (killi) and traumas. The ritual for the Mangara god which is a part of many Tovil rituals, is suggested by Kapferer to be a hunting rite for a king, but Mangara is also the buffalo-god and central in the cults of worship in ancient pastoral areas such as the Hambantota district in the southern province. The Gammaduva rituals for Pattini form a harvesting rite for a feudal society and the offerings imitate the burgeoning of nature. Astrology is important for the Sri Lankans in any stage of life, and the Bali Tovil rituals are modelled on the basis of astrological knowledge of the powers of the planets' gods (deSilva, 2000).

The "Tovil system" is, as the above shows, a complex and hybrid ritual system in which many aesthetic, religious, social and cultural elements are deployed, and certainly due to the ancient history of the system there are many more influences than I am aware of. The Rata

Yakuma ritual discussed in this work is, like the other rituals, a genuine rite with its own "social theme" and its own unique design. When performed it brings about its own "mode of being" through the means of the aesthetic technologies processed. The social theme of the Rata Yakuma rite is the social world of women, purity and fertility issues, as well as the lifeworlds of lovers, husbands and wives. The rite contains two key cosmological meta narratives. The first concerns the malevolent capacities of the demon Kalu Kumare who lusts for "foetuses", and shows how his influences on the patient are broken. Secondly, it is the story of the grand offering made by the Riddi Bishawas to Buddha in order to conceive children. The Natyasastra, the dance drama theory of Bharata (Indian) Natyam (Dance), was emphasised by the Aduras as influential for the aesthetic design of the Rata Yakuma ritual in particular. Consequently, it became a mission of mine to look into if, and how the concepts of the Natyasastra are fruitful in the analysis of the ritual as a study of the text and its possible influences on the system had not yet been made.

I.III.III. "Tovil dance" – the Language of Gods

Randy Martin (Lepecki 2004) suggests in his work on "modern dance" that: "Dancing bodies reference a social kinetic, a sentient apprehension of movement and a sense of possibility as to where motion can lead us, that amounts to a material amalgamation of thinking and doing as world-making activity" (Ibid., 2004: 48). His position is indistinguishable from the position taken on culture as a dialectical process of creation and reality making and the perception of dance described by Hughes-Freeland above. Dance as an art form is in my view mainly a creation of form and pure sensibility, but dance is also inter-subjective and conceptual; it is highly transgressive and as an aesthetic regime it can be adapted to many "categories" of cultural performances.

The art of dance is a key element of the "Tovil rituals", and dance is in the South Asian religious tradition perceived as the creation of the god Iswara in his avatara (divine appearance) as Shiva Natyaradja (dance king). Summing up the purposes and ontology of the dance creations of Shiva: "The Essential Significance of Siva's Dance is threefold: First, it is the image of the Rhythmic Play as the Source of all Movement within the Cosmos, which is Represented by the Arch: Secondly, the Purpose of his Dance is to Release the Countless souls of men from the Snare of Illusion: Thirdly the Place of the Dance, Chidambaram, the

Centre of the Universe, is within the Heart." (A. Coomaraswamy, 1924 (1985: 65)). In other words, it is a complex "theory" of dance that touches both metaphysical, religious, aesthetic and embodied dimensions of the art form. It is also common to characterise the dance of Shiva and his wife Lakshmi, as lake or tando where the lake is the feminine aspect of dance, tando the masculine. The dance style of the Tovil tradition is classified as the latter. Moreover, in the Tantric system, which is central for the "ritual technology" of the Tovils, mantra sound and yantra form are the constituting elements of cosmos, elements that enable communication between beings in all worlds. In the Tovils, dance is the creation of form to the sound of drums, but the foot and hand jingles make the body into a percussion instrument. In ritual, the sound/movement are given indexical qualities, as the items attract pleas and engage the supernaturals at the same time. One could say that by imitating the movement of Shiva who dances in order to break illusions brought upon men, the dance helps bring back the patient to his/her senses, and evict the supernaturals from their bodies. As a system of bodily movement patterns, "Tovil dance" forms a classical art form; one that is conventional and distinct in form and expression. Its compositional density enables continuous artistic innovation and developments by its performers. "Tovil dance" items are classified according to what offering act that they "bolongs to". The movementpatterns are more or less complex and more or less standardised. In other words, in the performance of some items the "correctness" of the dance is strictly observed while in others there are space for individual variance and creative innovation.

I.III.IV. "Tovil dance" in Cultural Performance

The work of Catherine Bell (1997), a scholar in religious history, concerns four categories of cultural performances, namely: rituals, theatrical performance, dramatic spectacle and public events. In Bell's view there are correlations between theatre and rituals as "rituals (are) full of theatre, dance and performance…" and therefore the similarities between the aesthetic plane and "performance communicate on multiple sensory levels: visual imagery, dramatic sounds and sometimes even tactile, olfactory and gustatory stimulation" (Ibid: 160). The repertoire of the Aduras as well as students of "traditional dance" performing "Tovil dance" includes both public ceremonies, harvesting rites and curing rites, as well as stage dance productions

and dance patterns choreographed in dialectics with a narrative structure – dance/dramas.[4] Of particular interest for us here, for now, is that Bell's work clearly shows the existence of a variety of ritual concepts serving a multitude of "ends". For the thesis I have selected a wide range of cases that exemplify contemporary performances where dancers trained in "low-country dance" ("Tovil dance") play a part. The performances are quite different both in regard to their operational concepts, compositional form and in the pragmatic ends they set out to serve. These are analytical concepts developed by Bell which I have found very useful in order to be able to address multiple categories of performances where "Tovil dance" is used as an performance element. In order to position Bell's concepts, her work is addressed in more detail at the start of chapter 3.

I.IV Analytical Inspirations

I.IV.I Defining the Aesthetic

When I started this project I did it with a conviction that it was crucial to look into the field of aesthetics in order to get to terms with the "adaptive" capacities of the "Tovil system" in contemporary culture and its continuation in a period where the powers of the supernaturals it serves are evidently weakened (Larsen, 1998). Moreover, the Aduras had brought to my attention that the "mental balancing principles" of the "Rata Yakuma" ritual that is the focus of this work was influenced by the rasa aesthetics of the "Indian" dance drama tradition, Bharata (India) Natyam (dance). In the theory of aesthetic experience, the classic work Natyasastra by Bharata Muni, the most important term is 'rasa', which literally means 'tincture' or 'essence', a term which is generally translated as flavour, whereas aesthetic experience is described as the tasting of flavour (rasavadana) or simply as tasting (svada, asvada) (Coomeraswamy, 1934: 47). To get into if and how, the concepts of rasa aesthetics are employed in the "ritual technology" of the Rata Yakuma rite would supplement earlier studies of the system. (I consider the rasa aesthetics more elaborately in chapter 5). I found

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[4] The work of the great Sri Lankan dramatist Sri Lanka Sarachchandra concerns the development from mask drama acts in the "Tovil system" – into Koalam theatre/mask theatre portraying colonial officers and characters from local folklore – which again is the foundation for the local theatre tradition. The work of Nurnberger shows the transformation of "Tovil dance" into stage dance.

an abstract of the Natyasastra in Nevill's collection (1955), a text that at my time of writing was more than 400 years old. The text provides evidence for the assumption that the Natyasastra, which was composed about 2000 years ago by Bharata Muni, influenced ancient ritualists of the "Tovil system" in their work.

What I learned in my explorations of aesthetic theories in general, is that these works address a highly confusing mixture of concerns and explorations of concepts regarding creation (becoming), composition, aesthetic judgement, craftsmanship, semiotic significations, social classes, institutional aspects and power. This became more complex as theories on arts and aesthetics in my own disciplinary "Western" tradition "start" with the work of Baumgarten: "Aesthetica" (sense perception), published in 1750 and Kant with his "The critique of Judgement" (1790 (1987)). Emmanuel Kant's reflections on the "disinterested" aesthetic experience evoked through visual contemplation on qualitatively outstanding art works became the point of reference of contemporary theories on aesthetics and aesthetic experience in the "West". Comparatively the Adura's reference – the Rasa Aesthetics of Bharatamuni – concerns the art of ritual dance/drama. But whereas Kant was only interested in the subjective /objective "glaze" of arts (and nature), the dramatists of the east put together an aesthetic theory including all the five sense modalities. The different approaches of "tasting sense" (Bharata Muni, 1950) and "judging taste" (Kant, 1987), are related to different understandings of the relation between body and mind and sensor modalities. For Bharata-Muni, most important were the sensor modalities of vision, sound and touch, but smell and taste were also included in his dramaturgical method. Moreover, whereas the Western tradition was perceived as a "universal" theory on beauty, the tradition following "Bharatamuni" focused on the whole spectrum of emotions possibly engaged in the audience through the media of "aesthetic works" where beauty is perceived as only one of many aesthetic features of arts. Moreover, whereas Immanuel Kant aimed to prove the existence of pure reason, a sense of truth that could claim universal validity, the question of reason has never been one of controversy in Indian philosophy, at least there is no corresponding word in Sanskrit (Gupta, 2000: 27). According to Kant, reason is involved in our ability to gain objective knowledge. Differently, Buddha recognised through meditation that thought comes later than perception, that thinking is a secondary approach of revealing truths. However, in these traditions truth denotes different aspects of reality, while Kant

thought of truth as the undifferentiated sense of something. Buddha, for his part, stressed that all sorts of perceptions were "illusionist", and found truth beyond realisations with and without perception of nothingness – as nothingness also is a negation of itself as completely nothing. What both Abhinawagupta, a philosopher developing the ideas of the Natyasastra, and Kant regard as one of the main effects on the human mental state when encountering well composed aesthetic works is the feeling of balance, calm and reason of, as Abhinawagupta says; santarasa – taste of peace. The idea is not new with Kant for the Western traditions since also Aristotle was aware of catharsis the revelatory power of imageries evoked by arts (Cavallaro, 2001). That sense experience engaged by arts could effectuate "purification" of mind. This principle is, as I will show in chapter 4–5, central for the "curing" effects of the Tovil rite to be addressed, the Rata Yakuma. I stress however that my informants never discussed the principles of Rata Yakuma and the work of Bharatamuni with me as they actually had a superfluous theoretical knowledge about the work. But they had a clear concept that the ritual technology included the "evoking" of all emotions and that in effect the patient (aturea) would be OK again – "santosai".

In need of a model that encompassed the diverting traditions on aesthetics I got "help" from Deleuze and Guattari because in: "What is Philosophy" (1991) and "the Logic of Sense" (1996) they had come up with some interesting ideas. In Deleuze and Guattari's view art(works) are compositions with sensations/affects-perceptions. They are the work of sensation, distinguished from compositions put together through and for technical ends. The plane of composition, with its colours, material and form, and movement will, when "aesthetically" constructed, create a field of vibration autothelically perceived by our precepts and affects, our sensibility (Deleuze and Guattari, 1996: 240). Moreover, according to Deleuze and Guattari (1991) there are three forms of thought: we think through concepts, functions and sensations. These three characterise and distinguish the "planes" of thought of philosophy, science and aesthetics, but none of them can exist without the other. They are interrelated planes of thought, one dominant at the time – in particular chains of thought. The analytical categories suggested by Deleuze and Guattari, correlate in principle to the Buddhist notion of the "tripartite" way we perceive the world: "immanent", "material" and "sensible" (Nayantiloka, 1997). Art works in this understanding are the composition of sensations and concepts. With Deleuze and Guattari (1996): "Composition is the only

definition on art. The composition is aesthetic – that what is not composed is neither art. The relationship between the technical plane of composition and the aesthetical one has shifted throughout history" (Ibid: 240). The components of aesthetical practices are identified as: form, sentiment, materiality, colour, style, technology, technique, meaning and aesthetics; understood as the relation between subjective perception, sentiments and emotions and the aesthetic work. The way I myself perceive aesthetics, simply points to the generative perceptually excessive aspect of any cleverly composed creations, or composed creations that feed human imagery, emotions and desires and enlighten our intentional directedness as we act throughout life. In my understanding, the "plane of composition", structures the density of the art works.

The analytical distinction made by Deleuze and Guattari between concepts and aesthetics, provided cues for my own perception and analysis of the "Tovil system" and "Tovil dance". By treating the aesthetic regimes and aesthetic media employed and the concepts orienting the creation of cultural performances separately, it became possible to work out why the public emphasis on language and dance policies could have such a great impact in the field of culture in the Sri Lankan context as I argue in chapter 6-7. As I understand the work of for instance Don Handelman (1990 (1998)), which I will get into shortly, he fuses the two in analysis and as a consequence the different features of a concept (idea) and how they are brought to our attention through a great range of aesthetic regimes and practices become blurred. My analytic diversion also enabled, I suggest, a sound analysis of the dialectics of continuity and change in the "Tovil system". The analytical distinction of Deleuze and Guattari is on its own quite superficial and I received more help, this time from Ranciere, to link aesthetics, religion, arts and cultural policy together.

Ranciere (2004) in his work the politics of aesthetics, is interested in the social dimension of the aesthetic and perceives the aesthetic as the "heterogeneous sensible", a shared abode or ethos, here understood as the mode of being of individuals and communities, which again enables the formation of a "sense communis" – the community. From the community "the political" evolves. In his view the political concerns two things: the distribution of "the sensible" and the distribution of material/monetary goods. Ranciere defines the aesthetic as: "the system of a priori forms determining what presents itself to sense experience" (Ibid:

13). In his perspective an aesthetic regime, or artistic phenomena, is identified by its adherence to a specific regime of the sensible, and artistic practices are "ways of doing and making" that intervene in the general distribution of "ways of doing and making" – as well as in the relationships they maintain to modes of being" (Ibid: 13). He links the distribution of the sensible to the question of access (time/space) and power as he says: "The distribution of the sensible reveals who can have a share in what is common to the community based on what they do and on the time and space in which this activity is performed" (Ibid: 12). And inspired by Plato, Ranciere identifies three ways of distributing the sensible that structure the manner in which arts can be perceived and thought of as forms of art and as forms that inscribe a sense of community: the surface of "depicted" signs (visual arts), the split reality of the theatre (and literature), the rhythm of dancing chorus – the choreographed "communal bodies" (Ibid: 14). Ranciere in short, set out to come to terms with the potential of "aesthetics" in the "becoming" of the political. His notion of aesthetic regimes of arts is in my view applicable to the "Tovil system", where the "Tovil system" takes the position of a distinctive "aesthetic regime", more explicitly so does the art form of "Tovil dance". Undoubtedly the system deals with "modes of being" a shared abode of "ethos" engaged by the interaction between humans and the supernaturals of laukika. "Tovil dance" as an aesthetic regime both defines and transgresses social boundaries. I will get into Ranciere's definition of religious arts in the first chapter, where I put emphasis on his notion of origin and purpose as defining religious arts. Of interest here is that his definition of arts includes the fields of dance and music. In my own research I have focused on "Tovil dance", and its contemporary employments through the example of several cultural performances. In the last section of the thesis I will get into "the political" dimension of the triangular relation between aesthetics, communities and the political, and look into how cultural policy programs have effectuated the wide distribution of the art form. The model of Ranciere also provides an ontological vision for how "Tovil dance" has managed to become an agent in the formation of the "Buddhist Sinhalese" identity with his perception of "the aesthetic" as a means of bringing about a "shared mode of existence" which again enables the creation of communities. I suggest that the cognitive process can be explained in the following manner: drawing on Connerton, Edensor (2002) gives the following perspective on the "doxic" generating power of cultural performance: "By demanding stylised and repetitive performances from the participants, memory and identity

become inscribed into the body. Since there is no scope for interpretation or improvisation in these enactions, they become part of "social habit memory". This mnemonic effect, embodied within the (national) subject, bestows an affective yet disciplined sense of belonging, a sense that one can successfully perform, that one possesses a competence to enact the ritual and may be called upon to ensure its continued specificity in the future" (Edensor, 2002: 74). From this perspective one could say that the "disciplining" of bodies into a common "mode of existence" through the media of dance, such as "Tovil dance", enables the creation of distinctive communities. I leave the notion of the aesthetic aside and stress that I myself treat the insights on "the aesthetic" by Deleuze and Guattari and Ranciere as plausible ontological visions for a sound analysis of the interrelation between aesthetic works and "the social".

I.IV.II Exploring the Aesthetic Dimension of Cultural Performances

The title of Don Handelman's work "Model and Mirrors – towards an anthropology of public events" (1990 (1998)) is clearly influenced by Geertz's (1973) work on rituals, since Handelman's model plays on the perception that such systems are simultaneously models of and for realities. The title of Handelman's book is very promising in regard to our need for a clarification of the similarities and differences between all kinds of cultural performances. The anthropologist, Elisabeth Fuller Collins (1997) who worked with ritual specialists in Tamil Nadu, India, is interested in the theoretical debates illuminating the power aspect of rituals and she has found two key directions in contemporary anthropology. Firstly, she sees theories in the quest for illuminating what rituals do to people, and secondly, what people do with rituals. The first direction, inspired by the works of Michel Foucault, seeks to explore how religious and ritual systems reflect and legitimise structures of power. The other direction, inspired by the works of Pierre Bourdieu, seeks to explore how rituals are put into play with the intention of satisfying material and symbolic interests, and is organised by reference to a determined set of economic and social conditions. That is to say, the first direction sees ritual systems as systems with the potential of legitimising and reproducing relations of power. The other direction looks upon the social world surrounding the rituals and seeks to explore the agency of social status and monetary (material) interests that are at play in relation to rituals. Looking at Handelman's work from the viewpoint of Fuller Collins, Handelman takes a structural approach and explores through several examples how

the events concerned reflect and legitimise structures of power. His argument that the "meta design" for many contemporary nationalist rituals are the structures and features of public bureaucracy, and the importance of its homogeneous features, come across as convincing.

The model of "the models and mirrors" developed by Handelman is quite ambitious and complex and it not only includes a say on how rituals reflect or legitimise structures of power, it is also very promising in regard to revealing the ability of public events to enforce social transformations. Handelman distinguishes between the event that models the lived-in world and the event that presents the lived-in world. He illuminates the features of the two in the following way when he says that: "In the event of modelling makes transformation happen that directly affects the wider social orders. The event of presentation holds up a mirror to social order, selectively reflecting versions of the latter that largely are known, of in more dispersed and fragmented fashion… The event of presentation may not be of profound significance, but it is comparatively simple in the logic of its constitution and operation" (Ibid: 48). In other words one type is homogeneous with existing worlds while the other challenges the being of existing worlds. This distinction alone engages with intricate philosophical questions too complex to address here such as the many possibilities of how we perceive our being in the world. I do agree with Handelman's view that: "all public events, in their creation of limited social worlds, are exercises in holism" (1990: 81) as an idea of a whole is the basis for any conceptual perception. But when he continues and says that: "It is in events of modelling that the organization of holism is the most sophisticated – for these occasions fully synthesise morphology and processuality" (Ibid: 81) I get lost and wonder how I can make this meaningful for my own analysis of cultural performances. However I very much appreciate that Handelman sets out to include the aesthetic dimension of public events in his analysis; his mistake, in my view, is that he does so without explicitly stating so. For example when he says: "Within ritual forms, autopoietic qualities of self-organisation and qualities of complexity go hand in hand" (Ibid: 10) I would have made explicit that I was drawing on general aesthetic theory where the aesthetic mode and its compositional density are made important, and that I was drawing on the common opinion (after Kant) that an artwork in general can be perceived as an autonomous creation by its perceiver, and that fine artworks potentially come about as sublime, with a potential for affecting human emotions and effect transgressive ideas. It is not difficult to agree that

the greater the complexity in the plane of composition employed in an artwork, the more distinctly it comes about, but some artworks are created based on composition minimalism and do not come across as less "sublime". The idea that complexity in the interior organisation as he says, strengthens the transformative potential of the event is thus not reasonable.

The way Handelman fuses his analysis of the ideography of the 'meta design" of the public events and the aesthetical technology employed for the event are unclear to me. Perhaps it is true that the logics and features of bureaucratic design, as he argues, are mimicked through the compositional structure of his examples of nationalist rites, and that this particular form of time/space compression engages a defined aesthetic; a sensibility which places its "being" in continuity with the "original" – the state bureaucracy. My critical comment to this view is just that in my experience, to create an aesthetic work, which any cultural performance necessarily is, and the social, religious or political meaning that we invest in these works, are two distinct processes, in the same way as the material world and our imagination have separate existences which are conjoined in our social worlds and which create and constitute our cultural ethos. The notion of how an artwork possibly realises aesthetic excess or not, which Handelman's own model concerns, does not apply for an analysis of how the transformative capacities of certain cultural performances transgress the limits of subjectively perceived aesthetic modes of experiences. It is my view that if we do not separate forms of expression and semiotic interpretation, it is not possible to make sense of how an aesthetic form such as "Tovil dance" engages with a diverse set of "ends" in a variety of cultural performances. So, in order to simplify things a little, I want to offer an alternative to Handelman's model. I find, as addressed above, the analytic distinction made by Deleuze and Guattari between science, aesthetics and philosophy and correspondingly between function, sense and concepts fruitful for the general study of cultural performances. It is my view that as a social activity or cultural performance comes with all three elements. A cultural performance serves an end/function, it involves aesthetic technologies in its creations and some conceptual ideography that gives directions for and structures the event, illustrating how the event becomes perceived as meaningful for us. When utilized in an analysis of cultural performance the three should be addressed separately, and it is my hope that through this work I can demonstrate the value of this position.

I.IV.III A Short Note on the Phenomenological Influence

The study of phenomenology is the study of "being in the world". Husserl, the father of this philosophical direction, stated that a social phenomenon is a study of a lifeworld. Husserl defined a lifeworld as "pre-theoretical and theoretical levels of the world of everyday life" (Luckman, 1999: 27). The lifeworld as such is both the explainable and what we take for granted in our daily lives. Moreover, Husserl states that the various lifeworlds exist because we feel, think and act in inter-subjective relation with others. As such: "phenomenology is the scientific study of experience. It is an attempt to describe human consciousness in its lived immediacy before it is subject to theoretical elaboration or conceptual systematising" (Jackson 1996: 2). Central to phenomenological theories is the concept of intentionality and agency. According to Kapferer (1997) "Intentionality of human beings is a dynamic force of their being-in-the-world of their world oriented action, the worlds in which they are projected having force upon their activities" (Ibid: 5). Phenomenology as such becomes a semiotic study of intentionality, agency, meaning and action of subjects and social groups. The concept of inter-subjectivity is sound in the "Buddhist ethos" of my informants, as it works on the idea that all beings in the world(s) are perceived to be substantially related with each other. Consequently (in the religious domain), one's intentional acts are capable of interfering with others' lives as well as changing one's own (mediated by the agency of the supernaturals). Common life orientation, shared religious and aesthetic experience and intentional directedness form the collective imaginary ideography of distinctive communities or "lifeworlds". In my own wider interpretation, phenomenology works as a guiding method for scientific research. It involves taking what people say and do seriously. It also addresses the inter-subjective dimension of lifeworlds as well as the dimension of "agency", or power involved in directed enactment in and upon their worlds. Cultural policy forms a field of intentional agency which, when put into motion, influences our "lifeworlds".

I.V Religion and the Arts

I.V.I The Adura as an Artisan and the Buddhist Monk as an Artist

Ames (1964) suggests that the equivalent to the Western distinction between the artisan and the artist can be made in the religious domain in Sri Lanka. In general, the artisan takes the materiality and physical aspects, the technology of their piece as the point of departure of creation. Although the artist works from the direction of an idea or a concept, the work of an artist is a creation of imagination and some works appear fantastic. In Ame's view, the artisan creates domestic things, things to be used, to serve worldly ends by referring to the concept of vidiya which means knowledge of practical usage, while the artist creates things that evoke "pure feelings" aesthetics or "concepts" that require skilled minds to understand. With Ames' syllogism the Buddhist monk becomes like the "genius artist", enlightened and balanced by his meditations on the nature of perceptions and sensible matters. The monk is therefore refined in his "ritual craftsmanship". The "priests" such as the "Aduras" who master the "spirit science" (yaksa-bhuta vidiya) are perceived as ordinary "workers" and not enlightened beings as their rituals serves mundane (laukika) pragmatic purposes and are not mental enhancements and do not have transcendent enlightening ends. Ames' syllogism is however not done on the basis of the level of achievements of the artist such as the density of the level of composition (complexity on the level of sensibility), technical/material achievements, or other common criteria of evaluation of aesthetic works. The distinction is made on the notion of whether the work serves the enhancement of subjective "mental capacities" or not, in fusion with the notion of the ethical nobility of the people and supernaturals involved in the practices. It is in this aspect that the contemporary "high arts" and the ritual work of a Buddhist priest are given value using the same criteria, on the notion of intellectual complexity of the concepts of reference for the work, and the density of the guiding concepts for "meaningful" perception. My own field notes cannot shed light on whether Ames' distinction is relevant for the understanding of the status held by "traditional artists" in Sri Lanka today, but what is certain is that Ames himself was not concerned about the role played by the Aduras as "traditional artists" at all, which is understandable due to my finding that this "role change" first became apparent during the 1990s (see chapter 7).

I.VI On the Field of Cultural Policy

I.VI.I Sri Lankan Cultural Policy in the Field of Dance

According to Burckhardt (1904), who wrote about the Italian Renaissance, there are three "powers" of society: the State, religion and culture. In his words: "There are primarily political and primarily religious epochs and finally epochs which seem to live for the great purposes of culture. Ancient Egypt, Mexico and Peru are examples of "Culture determined by the State". The world of Islam illustrates "culture determined by religion", while the Greek polis illustrates "the state determined by culture" (Ibid: 8). Bandara (1970) draws attention to the intertwined, inseparable relationship between religion, arts and culture in Sri Lanka, an observation whose overarching implications my own work set out to follow up. Looking into the Sri Lankan situation through the concepts of Burckhardt, I would say that Sri Lankan culture is determined by religion, but that the State nonetheless plays a significant role as a promoter and facilitator of religious and cultural affairs; a role evidently taken on by central powers in the country for centuries. This work concerns many contemporary cultural practices that work in continuity with the constitution of the Buddhist ethos and "Buddhist nationalist identity" in the field of popular culture. The example of "Tovil dance" and its potential as a kinaesthetic identity marker of this national identity take a central position in the line of argument. The post-colonial governments in Sri Lanka have taken very seriously their responsibility for the "promotion" of "Tovil dance" (and other dance traditions) and the "conservation" of the art form for future generations and have supported the creation of many local and national dance institutions as well as produced many cultural performances where "traditional dancers" have played a central part. The cultural policy programs concerning "traditional dance" work alongside other activities for the socialisation into and constitution of the Buddhist ethos orchestrated by the government in collaboration with monks – at temples, at schools, Sunday-schools as well as through the broadcasting media of radio and television[5]. Today it is a fact that the "Ves dancer", the up-country dancer in his ceremonial dress, is an icon of Sri Lanka, an ambassador of the country, travelling around the world as an image on the stamps of letters, or in books and on postcards, or in person as

[5] I bring attention to the very inspiring work by Tim Edensor on "National identity, Popular Culture and Everyday life" (2002) which explores in depth the subjective and social dimension of "culture as an engine in nationalist identity formations"

a representative of Sri Lankan traditional arts and culture[6]. The low-country dancer equivalent is the Tovil dancer dressed up in mask dance costume.

In order to get to terms with this new position of dance and the change in status of the Aduras I had to get into the field of cultural policy. However, at the time of my fieldwork the work on cultural policy was genuinely new in the history of social science research in Sri Lanka and as a consequence I lacked at the outset basic information about the organisation of governmental cultural affairs in Sri Lanka. I wish that I had had a companion on Sri Lankan cultural policy and ideological tendencies, policy model inspirations to read as my work took shape, but I did not. Such background information could have enabled me to do more during the time that I had available for research, than the basic mapping of the bodies, identifying and tracking down people in significant positions, and getting an overview of their programs and contemporary policy moves. Moreover, cultural policy as a field of research is subjected to a broader political discourse and comparative institutional practices and "policy tendencies" than my study conveys. The political processes and discourses directing the development of the field during my fieldwork took place in other arenas than those I participated in. However, the information that I managed to work out and present in chapter 6 serves its purpose as a context for the broader discussion on changes in the "Tovil system" in chapter 7. By carrying out research among civil servants I encountered an arena where anthropological theories and concepts on culture, ethnic identity, and multiculturalism instruct practice. Henrietta Moore (2004) addresses the fact that for contemporary anthropologists the lines between theoretical analysis and cultural production are fictional because the fields are dialectical and constituting for each other. In my experience it was not difficult to carry out fieldwork in this network as I had worked in the field myself, but in regard to analysis many concepts turned out to take on confusingly diverting meanings. However, the outcome of the exercise was in my view highly useful because cultural policy is an important dimension of processes of cultural production and change in general, and is crucial to look into when researching cultural issues in a nation with such a strong public sector as Sri Lanka.

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6 For the history behind this iconic status: read Marianne Nurnberger, "Dance is the language of Gods" (1998)

I.VI.II The Field of Cultural Policy

I stated at the outset that it is the dynamics between the institutional and aesthetic dimension of culture that are the main concern of the thesis, and it is therefore necessary to give some attention to what I mean by the institutional dimension. The work of Ranciere (2004) on "The Politics of Aesthetics" that I addressed above brings attention to the importance of distribution of "aesthetic regimes" in the formation of (hegemonically governed) communities. On the social level the distribution is channelled through various media governed by institutions serving social, political, religious, as well as commercial interests. In the words of Castoriadis, an institution is: "a socially sanctioned, symbolic network in which a functional component and an imaginary component are combined in variable proportions and relations… the imaginary of institutions (are) something that is its own product" (Castoriadis, 1998: 132). In other words, institutions are human creations of imagination serving pragmatic purposes. Inspired by Foucault, the "founder" of cultural policy studies Tony Bennett has made the following definition of culture: "a historically specific set of institutionally embedded relations of government of which forms of thought and conduct of extended populations are targeted for transformation, partly via the extension through the social body of forms, techniques, and regimens of aesthetic and intellectual culture in relation to discourses of moral regulation" (1992: 26). Whereas Bennett points to the discursive and ethic dimension of the field, the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (1999) complements the definition by addressing the features of the generative aspect of culture – culture as praxis. This position carries with it a potential for novelty and change as Bauman states that: "Culture is as much about inventing as it is about preserving: about discontinuity as much as about continuation, about novelty as much as about tradition: about routine as much as about pattern breaking, about norm-following as much as about the transcendence of norms: about the unique as much as about the regular, about change as much as about monotony of reproduction, about the unexpected as much as about the predictable" (1999: xiv). In other words, the field of cultural policy concerns the distribution, management, rule regulation, development, preservation, promotion and creation of "aesthetic regimes" and the regulation of the public sphere. The field organises politically defined and technically and materially constrained semiotic/aesthetic practices.

In reality, cultural policy bodies structure the recruitment to and activities of public institutions for training, production, development, research/documentation, preservation, promotion of material heritage and "knowledge practices" under their jurisdiction and govern the ethical dimension of the fields through the means of normative regulation mechanisms. For instance the State governs the expanding markets of the "cultural industries" which are subjected to international law regulations and cultural agreements between nations, through international organisations such as GATT and UNESCO (Miller and Yudice, 2002). Access to knowledge and methods of training of mental and bodily skills, are crucial for the individual subject in regard to accessing the many arenas, positions and resources where such qualifications are required. By regulating access to institutions of training and promotion, the State consequently manages the distribution of power. Cultural policy is in this perspective the structuring and institutionalising of the social disciplining of the body and mind, the shaping of the social doxa and habitus. Critical voices state that: "Hegemony is secured (by the rulers) when the dominant culture uses education, philosophy, religion, advertising and art to make its dominance appear normal and natural to the heterogeneous groups that constitute society" (Miller and Yudice, 2002: 7). In our case, this is particularly so when it is joined with the image of an "ethical state" (or a 'just' state) such as the Sri Lankan. Foucault in particular has been interested in the "disciplinary aspect" of governance, and states that: "The success of disciplinary power derives no doubt from the use of simple instruments: Hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it, the examination" (1984: 188). Educational bodies as well as specialised professions employ these mechanisms through exams, initiation ceremonies, awards and competitions, for securing the standards of their training or their work and the hierarchical classification, ranking, of subjects involved in the fields. "Tovil dance" (see chapter 7 in regard to education and dance competitions) is in this perspective just one of many "traditional aesthetic practices" disciplined in this fashion and is an aesthetic practice structuring the social hierarchy as well as communicating symbols of communion.

Cultural policy is a disciplinary field of discourse and practice of its own, engaging many more dimensions than it is possible for me to address here. What is important for this work is the way the field manages to conceptualise the interrelation between policy, governance,

and the field of culture and the role played by public institutions in the formation of the field, as I hope to have managed to convey above. I will go into more detail about the most significant Sri Lankan governmental bodies and their history in chapter 6. There are nonetheless two important policy trends that I will mention that took place during my research period (see chapter 6). The first was the policy for the enhancement of the co-existence among social groups with a diverse set of cultural/religious practices – the objective of "cultural diversity". The second was the program for the establishment of 100 cultural centres. Both moves dealt with the troublesome interrelationship between Buddhism and culture in Sri Lanka first identified by Bandara as mentioned above, in other words the ontological position of religion in the constitution of the post-colonial social democratic republic of Sri Lanka and its social implications.

I.VII Chapters

Chapter 1 – *Public Expressions of Religious Worlds*

The "Tovil system" has for centuries been part of the "popular culture" engaging in a "semiotic battle" with other expressions of religious worlds in the Sri Lankan public sphere. In order to get to terms with this status I sought help from studies about "popular culture". I also set out to position the religious and hegemonic aspect of popular culture theoretically, but also through the presentation of the fragmented but still highly descriptive comparative cases of public expressions of religious worlds. The key aim of this chapter is to present the contemporary context of cultural production that the "Tovil system" is a part of.

Chapter 2 – *Field Context and Methodological Considerations*

During my time of research the Sri Lankan Tamils and Sinhalese were at war, a situation that coloured the life of the locals and restricted my own fieldwork. Some of the implications of this situation are addressed in this chapter. Then, the history of Sri Lanka, its geography and its people are introduced, along with an analysis of some urgent political situations creating the backdrop of my research. To do fieldwork in Sri Lanka created many challenges, particularly since I wanted to move around a lot and had problems finding a skilled translator to assist me. In the last part of this chapter I address some general social mechanisms at play that influenced my fieldwork, through the example of my own efforts at finding a skilled translator.

Chapter 3 – *"Tovil dance" in Contemporary Performance*

Many contemporary arts productions in Sri Lanka concern the war, the ethnic conflict and experiences of violence, and the play; "the Ritual", which concerns adultery and domestic violence is no exception. Other productions that I viewed by the same company, Centre Stage productions, had similar themes. However, the case of "the Ritual" is chosen in order to demonstrate in more detail the way "Tovil dance" is used as a performance element in contemporary productions. Moreover, the play script takes the lifeworld of the "Tovil system" as its point of reference and its themes are interrelated with the Rata Yakuma ritual to be presented in chapters 4 and 5. In order to get to grips with the hybrid form of the performance I get help from Catherine Bell's categories of cultural performances, a framework that I will make use of in the presentation of all performance cases considered in the thesis.

Chapters 4–5

The Rata Yakuma – the rite for safe delivery of children, is the focus of this section of the thesis. The rite as an aesthetic composition is highly sophisticated and the dominant affective mode of the rite is "happiness". Moreover, the ritual cosmography and ideography is interesting as it reveals that its composition is a hybrid form of many local ancient cults of worship. Important for our general argument of contemporary role of "Tovil dance" in Sri Lankan culture is that the present form of the Rata Yakuma rite reveals influences of creative innovations from "traditional art shows" and from public requests for the performance of particular offering acts. The greatest influences recorded concern change in costumes. innovation of pantomime, and comedy dialogue.

Chapter 4 – *Situating the Rata Yakuma*

The Riddi princesses celebrated in the Rata Yakuma rite received the power to cure pregnant women from Buddha. Historically, Riddi have taken many important positions in early Hindu and Buddhist pantheons. In this chapter I therefore take a closer look into the cosmography of key "supernaturals" that are offered to throughout the ritual. A Rata Yakuma rite is performed for a patient, and an important part of the curing process is the diagnosis. I therefore present two illustrative cases and the Adura's diagnostic process which

links the patient's condition with "vas dos" (sorcery) and "disti", a pollutive substance from malevolent supernaturals. On the first consultation a thread is tied for protection around the wrist or neck and if the "disti" is not bound/tamed by this act then probably a ritual performance will not be an effective cure and the Adura will advise the patient to seek alternative treatment. The "patient history" of these women makes reference to the period between the time they experience their first menses, a period when women are thought to be "killi", impure, and highly vulnerable to "vas dos" and "disti", to the puberty rite "the big girl become". By presenting a case of a "big girl become" ritual, I hope to shed light on some interesting links between the puberty rite and the Rata Yakuma.

Chapter 5 – *Rata Yakuma*

The ritual drama acts for the Riddi princesses are outstanding creations in the "Tovil system". The Aduras stressed the inter-relationship between the dance/drama of this act and the "epic" theory on Indian dance drama, the Natyasastra by Bharatamuni. In this chapter I therefore set out to explore the possible links between the ritual acts and the text. In order to do so I give a thorough introduction of the drama theory and some later interpretations of the text. The Natyasastra is a guide or manual for dance/drama and includes among other things detailed descriptions of various dance gestures and poses and instructions on how to convey various feelings or sentiments in performance. It is also a quite sophisticated theory on aesthetic experience. Another aim is to give a thorough description of the Rata Yakuma rite. In ritual performance the Aduras re-enact the curing powers granted the Riddi princesses by their grand offering to Buddha of a white celestial cloth. The drama-acts of the midnight watch concern how the Riddi makes her toilet, how she created the cloth and thus conceived a child, and finally how she nurtures her child. The Rata Yakuma ritual as a curing rite engages with the powers of ritual purification, the transaction between illness-causing demons and the patient, and the curing potency of the Riddi Bishawas as well as the power of Buddha, and by putting the demons back into their subordinate position below the human reign the cosmos is reordered. The overarching aesthetic aim of the ritual procedures is to please the mind of the patient and to give the audience a mental preconditioning that enables other more important Buddhist goals to be achieved. My analytical ambition in this chapter is to come to terms with the aesthetic dimension of cultural performances.

Chapter 6 – *Introducing Public Cultural Policy and its Institutions*

In the first chapter I argued that the Lankan state has taken on the role of ancient kings as the patron of the arts, and that Buddhist Sinhalese culture had been given preference in the politics of postcolonial governments. Many postcolonial changes of the "Tovil system" were motivated by renewed public interest in the practice. As exemplified in chapter 3, its royal ceremonial aspect has served politicians and others in need of symbolic power in their pursuit of public recognition. It is my view that governmental activities and programs have contributed to the survival of the Tovils, and in the following I will address the public bodies which have played a patron role. In this connection a short introduction will be given to cultural policy, or as they call this subject in Sri Lanka "Culture" (sanskruthika). An introduction of important governmental bodies of cultural policy and the priorities in the fields of cultural heritage, cultural identity and market regulations and some areas of conflict thereof will be given. The introduction of the field of cultural policy and implementing bodies is made with three goals in view.

First: it is necessary for the contextualisation of the chapter to follow on the development of "Tovil dance" as a field of aesthetic practice separate from the "Tovil system" from which it originates. As I will show in chapter 7, the institute of aesthetic studies at Alfred Crescent in Colombo has played an important role in this matter as they offer professional training in "Tovil dance".

Second: "Tovil dance" forms today an important kinaesthetic (the expressive language of body postures, coordination and movement) identity marker of the ethnic Buddhist Sinhalese and has iconic status within the Buddhist Sri Lankan nation. The chapter provides information on how this role of "Tovil dance" has been created by the State and put into play.

Third: in a period of ceasefire between the LTTE and the Government in 2001 – 2003, there was a great reform in regard to national cultural policy. The move signalled a gesture for the equal status of all ethnic groups within the Lankan state. Reading this change in the view of the three phase theory of the American cultural studies theorist Tony Bennett, (2001) on cultural diversity, I will argue that the Lankan public policy pointed towards a vision for the

implementation of level two – the stage of multiculturalism – replacing the dominating religious/ethnic separatist strategies of the 1950s with the phase of "multiculturalism", as well as "cultural diversity" was yet to be realised in practice.

Chapter 7 – *On Modern Transformations*

Modernity, internationalisation, the building of the autocratically-run democratic republic of Sri Lanka, the adoption of a capitalist economy, the culture industry etc. has had a great impact on the "Tovil system". This process of secularisation and commoditisation of traditional cultural (religious) practices, and the empowerment of social communities through spectacles seems to be a common process in the social and cultural adoption of a market economy and has been an object of discourse for many "Critical Theorists". Debord's (1967) claims that the capitalist media turn cultural practices into spectacles, and Baudrillard's (1981) view of the creation of post-modern arts as mere simulations of "the real" form the background for my discussion as they highlight the obstacles that the Aduras faced when introducing dance as a discipline at the university, and also the social and aesthetic implications of the fact that the Aduras lost their "birthright" to practise "Tovil dance".

My work on the "Tovil system" shows that the system and its context of operation has undergone transformations which have made it less actual, less complex, less detailed, less elaborate, less operative and more conventional and streamlined. One of the reasons for this change is that the teaching and promotion of the system used to be a duty held by particular castes, and was thus determined by birth. Today however, this "monopoly" has been broken and lessons in "Tovil dance" are given at schools and at the university. Another dimension concerns the fact that the "lifeworlds" that informed the system have disintegrated or been transformed. On the social level, liberal policies, particularly since 1977, have made social class a competing status to the old caste status regime. With capitalism, new markets for "Tovil dance" have appeared, and today "Tovil dance" is not just for Tovils but is performed in shows for foreign tourists, or at traditional art shows, and its art form is used in contemporary theatre productions. The politicians of the Lankan government have used the ceremonial "Tovil drum and dance" innovatively in a great range of public ceremonies in honour of themselves and other esteemed persons as well as in temple processions. The

"Tovil system" has thus evidently proved to have transformative capacities and has not moved out of the field of "popular" culture, but continues to be a ritual system which constitutes and negotiates social Buddhist identity.

The final questions to be addressed in the thesis are therefore: What is the contemporary version of the ancient trinity of the "Tovil system" between the central power, arts and religion? What is it about the "Tovil dance" as an art form, the Aduras as dancers, and the Sri Lankan socio/political religious context, which has enabled the Aduras to achieve such a successful mediation between the multiple arenas of performance? What are the ontological, creative, innovative and adaptive aspects of the system that have allowed its continuation through the passage of history and time? In order to shed light on these questions it is necessary to consider the modern transformations of the "Tovil system", and some of its aesthetic, social, religious and cultural aspects. The changes that the "Tovil system" is subjected to are multiple and influenced by processes taking place both in the social, religious, cultural, political and economic domains. This chapter examines a few, but also 0considers important aspects such as the involvement with the "modern capitalist spectacle", trans-national traditionalism, change in education institutions, the multiple ranking of caste, class and titles of honour, and adds a note on changes in the economic situation of the Aduras and the "Tovil system".



An ancient dagoba at Anhuradhapura – the ruined
city of the first Buddhist kingdom.

1. PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS OF RELIGIOUS WORLDS

1.1 Popular Culture, Arts and Religion

In this chapter I set out to provide the reader with some ideas about the vibrant pool of religious iconography deployed in the public sphere in Sri Lanka. The ontological position on culture taken for my exploration of aesthetic expressions of religious worlds pursued here is inspired by Tony Bennett who views culture as a: "historically specific set of institutionally embedded relations of government in which forms of thought and conduct of extended populations are targeted for transformation – partly via the extension through the social body of forms, techniques and regimens of an aesthetic and intellectual culture in relation to discourses of moral regulation" (Bennett, 1992: 26). In most places in Sri Lanka, symbols of political and religious loyalties colour the public spaces and define the dominating religious and political "lifeworlds" of the citizens occupying the territory. In the last section of the thesis I will address the way the Sri Lankan state, through its operative policies, has changed

the distribution of the aesthetic regime of "Tovil dance", and the social and cultural implications of this. This chapter therefore, is written with the intention of sketching out some of the many other expressions of Buddhist basic religious forms, icons and ideography with which "Tovil dance" co-exists in the public space. The examples relates with Buddhist religion and represents, with the work of Bennett, a semantic field of discourse of ethics and moral regulations.

This chapter is inspired by a visit I made a long time ago to the Historical Museum in Cairo where for the first time I was struck by the theatrical nature of the "state", and the interrelationship between the development of cosmology and state formations and material culture. The completeness of the system of signification of the Egyptian Pharaoh cult, the reproduction of some few basic symbols/iconic representations in thousands of copies/objects collected and displayed, made the vast social aesthetic distribution of the cult real thousands of years after its creation. The cult is now "dead and gone", and the objects thus appeared as a reminder of a civilisation that had once lived, and their detachment from actuality, from the "everyday", made me perceive the objects as stage props from a play to be staged, a film to be made. The presentation of the cases hereunder are hence slightly museum-like as they are consciously selected fragments of expressions of the Buddhist/ religious ethos expressed through popular concepts and media. Before we continue to the cases it is thus necessary to add a note on the concept of 'popular culture'.

1.1.1 On the Concept of Popular Culture

John Fiske has influenced my own understanding of popular culture as he, in his work "Understanding Popular Culture" (1989), gave me the first analytical concepts for how to address the field. His work takes as the point of departure popular culture in capitalist societies such as the UK, Australia and the US and is influenced by the work of European scholars such as the sociologist Bourdieu (1984), the social philosopher Michel de Certeau (1984) as well as the semiotician Roland Barthes (1973), the cultural studies "founder" Stuart Hall (1981), and the social theorist Bakhtin (1968) (Ibid: IV). Central in the discourse on popular culture is how to understand the dialectics between the structural (institutional) and hegemonic (discursive) aspects and the field of cultural/aesthetic practice. It is a predispo-

sition in all analysis of popular culture, in the theoretical world of cultural studies and critical theory that the field constitutes itself in dialectical relation to, but also as resistant to dominating "cultures" and "power centres". As Fiske put it: "Popular Culture always is a part of power relations: it always bears traces of the constant struggle between domination and subordination, between power and various forms of resistance to it or evasions of it" (Ibid: 19). Fiske is moreover influenced by Foucault and finds plausible his; "insistence that power relations cannot be adequately explained by class relations, that power is discursive and is to be understood in the specific contexts of its exercise – not in generalised social structures" (Ibid: 179). Sociological categories such as class, caste and "sub groups" do not structure the formation of "Popular culture" as it is a vibrant field of discourse crossing the borders of the sociologically perceived "hegemonic" structure of the social matrix. Fiske elaborates on the "resistance dimension" of "Popular culture" and states that: "Popular culture not only maintains social differences, it maintains their oppositionality and people's awareness of it. It can thus empower them to the extent that under the appropriate social level, and by such action to increase their socio-cultural space to effect a micro redistribution of power in their favour" (Ibid: 179). Fiske's focus on practice in preference to "structure" is equally emphasised by another scholar, Georg Yudice, who in his article on the conception of aesthetics in the public sphere (1990) addresses the following question: "What do I mean by this aesthetic dimension of the process of group formation?" (Ibid: 139) to which he answers that: "Taking as a point of departure Bakhtinian and Gramscian understandings of the cultural and ideological space in which all forms of consciousness necessarily take shape, it can be said that the aesthetic dimension is constituted by what I call after Bakhtin, an authoring process. It consists of the ways in which sets of individuals, marked by certain features socially recognized as common to them, negotiate and manage the heterogeneity of perspectives by which they are variously imagined, valued and devalued, in this way or that, on the basis of class, sex, race, religion, regional provenance and other "subject positions". This process of course is specific to the ensemble of institutions that make up a social formation" (Ibid: 136). Yudice points out that the struggle of opinion, which to him constitutes the field of "hegemonic discourse", is the result and not the premise of the production of popular culture, or the 'group ethos' in his terms. And moreover the hegemonic dominating aesthetic forms mediated through popular culture are heterogeneous expressions of a community. Yudice is highly influenced by Bakthin and continues

elaborating on the link between subjectivity and popular culture and says that: "The particular style and ethos of an individual or group is the result of an authoring process by which a speech will is manifested in the choice and manipulation of particular genres. Identity, then, is not a given but a practice, a deployment across the institutionalized terrain of a social formation because the genres through which such authorship take place are institutionally bound. Social change is thus a function of circumstances that alter the generic arrangements of institutions, which in turn alter the institutional arrangements of a social formation" (Ibid: 137). In comparison with Fiske, who also emphasises the dialectics between power structures and practice (and as I will get into below, the consumerist nature of "Popular culture") Yudice compliments his model by bringing in the Bakhtinian concept of "authoring" and thus addresses more explicitly the aesthetic and creative dimension of the formation of popular culture, its styles and expressions. Both draw on the analytical concept of style developed in the highly influential work by Michel de Certeau (1984) on: "The practice of everyday life".

In fact I have found it hard to adopt the commonly deployed dialectics of the "resistance" approach in my own field material on "Popular Culture" in Sri Lanka. I suppose that it is just because I have worked in the production centre of the "Buddhist" aesthetic regimes, and not among the "subalterns", those in the peripheral centre of the critical discourses (which I am most certain exist among all minorities in Sri Lanka, such as Christians, Tamil Hindus and Moors). The notion of Tamil and Western identity/culture are nonetheless the urgent and dominating categories in "discourses of cultural/political/religious subordination" in Sri Lanka, as thoroughly documented by the anthropologist Morten Olesen (2009) in his work on political discourse among an elitist English speaking community in Colombo. Drawing on his findings I suggest that if I should say that institutional/aesthetic formation of the field of "Popular Culture" in Sri Lanka develops in dialogue with hegemonic cultural streams, then the Buddhist aesthetic regimes form a language of resistance towards the Hindu dominated neighbour India and the "West". In this perspective, the Sri Lankan government becomes the cultural architect that, through its cultural policy programs supports the many cultural/religious monuments, the Sinhala publishing industry, production of cultural commodities, the protection and promotion of Buddhist heritage, support to temples, temple festivals and pilgrimages, and which preserves and promotes Buddhism as a

"significant" subculture in the international cultural sphere of the global community. My examples in this chapter can be read as successful outcomes of a cultural policy for the enhancement of Buddhist religion in Sri Lankan culture. I will not go into this aspect of the cases here, but in chapter 6 I address in more depth the institutional dimension of recent deployments of "Tovil dance" in "Popular Culture" by looking into the public cultural policy programs which I found first and foremost formed as a policy for protection and promotion of heritage, and in practice, Buddhist heritage. In McGuigan's words, which in my view are descriptive of the Sri Lankan situation: "Heritage is an international phenomenon promoted by governments concerned with national identity and tourist revenue and also by the commercial exploitation of ubiquitous and popular fascination with the past in diverse forms of entertainment." (1996: 118). In order to come to terms with how heritage is able to be such a powerful social agent, McGuigan suggests that: "The hegemonic power of national heritage... requires popular consent in order to work its spell. Traditional symbols and ritual evoke a vicarious sense of security in a country on the slide for a century, creating nostalgia for an imaginary past more splendid and enchanting than the gloomy present" (McGuigan, 1996: 123). With these words, McGuigan draws attention to how the motivation for cultural policy programs is not just political but also economic, and shows how the historicity aspect of "heritage" works its spell, as he says due to its "pre-modialist" appeal to the nationalist subjects.

The examples given in this chapter on the historical development of Buddhist iconography, a pilgrimage, popular expressions of "Tovil dance" in popular culture and three shops, come out as illustrative snapshots which all invite further scientific exploration. The examples should nonetheless serve our cause, which is to bring about an awareness of the vast distribution of Buddhist religious symbolism in popular culture in Sri Lanka. With this chapter it is my overarching aim to bring attention to how tangible signifiers of religious worship are distributed far and wide around the island territories and how the material distribution of religious aesthetics demarcates the space of a diverse religious community in Sri Lanka. By introducing the reader to the variety of arenas of performance that the Aduras of the "Tovil system" engage with I hope to help in providing an understanding of the "mainstream" aspect of the "Tovil system" in contemporary culture. Popular Culture is also about "consumption" – aesthetical creation serving a practical end and purpose as distinct

from the "classical" Kantian perception of the Arts as media for disinterested aesthetic contemplation. In Michel de Certeau's definition popular culture is: "Arts of making this or that i.e., as combinatory or utilizing modes of consumption. These practices bring into play a "popular" ratio, a way of thinking invested in a way of acting, and art of combination which cannot be dissociated from an art of using". (1984: xv). In other words, "popular culture" is not only expressions of the hegemonic and heterogenous ideography of a community, it is also consumer culture, concerned with tangible and intangible aesthetic creations that are used. In order to look into, however briefly and without making an explicit analysis of religious consumption, this aspect of the expressions of religious worlds in the field of "popular culture" is addressed through considering some important shopping complexes in Colombo.

In the areas of Sri Lanka where I worked, Buddhist iconography was widely distributed. However, I emphasise that in the southern town where I had my base, there are no less than 13 Muslim mosques, and that there are Churches and Hindu temples in almost every town that I visited as well. The reason why I give preference to Buddhist iconography in this chapter is simply because the "Tovil system" which this work concerns is Buddhist.

1.2 Buddhist Iconography

1.2.1 Religious Arts

Buddhism is a vivid part of popular culture in Sri Lanka and the interrelationship between arts and religious culture is at the same time ancient, contemporary, actual and urgent. Mohanty, a specialist in Indian philosophy links religious arts with Bhakti devotion (embodiment of the divine) in the following manner: "Religion as worship of the deity is essentially aesthetic. The figure of the deity is in itself formless. God may be worshipped and thought of under any name and form – 'God' is a creation of the artist. The songs in his or her praise are compositions of poets, to be sung in accordance with the canons of music and often in communion with other devotees. Religious rituals performed in the service of the deity involve subtle movements of the body, which transform the body into an aesthetic medium, not unlike Indian dance. Religion and art become inseparable." (J.N. Mohanty,

2000: 130). In Sri Lanka, arts and religion, as the above shows, are interrelated fields that inform each other mutually. Local traditional artistic practices are subjected to divine origin, and developed through history in relation with religious cults. The devoted artists brought about aesthetic forms of the divine forces, perceived and employed as iconic/indexical representations of the divine. I emphasise that there are many professional artists trained in "fine arts" operating in Sri Lanka whose work does not relate to religious practice at all. Some of them, such as Jurgen Zaringher whose work is shown below, are also occupied with religious orientations and imagery in their work. However, the works of this significant group, both in number and influence, are beyond the scope of the thesis.



"Colours of Life", (Sunday Times 11.11.2001) Jurgen Zaringher's art piece from his exhibit "Contemplation" at "Barefoot" gallery.

The artists working in the field of religious arts, or those who address and embrace the religious dimension in their works, are important for this study as they point to the many variations of religious arts co-existing with my ethnographic example, which is traditional dance. As I describe in chapter 7, the dancer performing a stage dance at a hotel, like the temple dancer, asks permission from the gods to dance. In other words, the indexical continuous relation between the art form dance and the gods is also respected by performers learning the art form at schools, and not just by those who are aspiring to become initiated ritualists. Bandara (1970) says that: "No-one in Ceylon would say that religion can be divorced from art, though this is essentially a situation that existed in the past when the two areas were so thoroughly interwoven and inter-connected that it was difficult to tell them apart" (Ibid., 1970: 62). Bandara suggests, according to my understanding of these words,

that the 1970s situation is about to change, and he bases his vision on his study of cultural policy programs where he found that training in local traditional arts and other artistic practices had been introduced in schools. There were additionally many cultural policy programs and institutions established for the enhancement of culture and artistic expressions, which transgressed the caste/guild restrictions that the field of traditional arts were subjected to in the past. The outcome of this policy has influenced the creation of the cultural context encountered in my fieldwork. It is a fact that because of the establishment of public bodies for training and performance, a highly marginal religious art form of the past, traditional dance ("Tovil dance"), is today quite a popular dance form.

The degree to which religion and artistic practice continue to be inter-related is exemplified by the following observation made by Bandara (1970): "Archaeological work in Ceylon is beset with certain difficulties that are not found in a country like Egypt or even in certain parts of India. The vast majority of people in Ceylon treat archaeological remains not as historical or scientific curiosities but as sacred sites and buildings. They are only secondarily significant to them as historical or scientific data. The people's wishes and emotions are primarily important, but it is absolutely necessary that a compromise is found in this matter between the demands of religious fervour and scientific study, for these monuments are priceless and constitute indispensable material to the historian and archaeologist" (Ibid: 53). Today, pilgrimages to these ancient places of worship are an important social activity. And from the early 1980s public bodies, the Central Cultural Fund and the Department of Archaeology, have handled the conservation business professionally. After my first fieldwork in Sri Lanka I described my experience of going on a pilgrimage from Matara to Katarangama and Kandy, both historical sights and pilgrim centres, together with some Buddhist informants and their families, and I compared this trip with my own experience of visiting music festivals in Europe in my early student years. The comparative case between music culture in the West and Buddhist religious festivals is included below in order to illustrate the similarities of idol worship and musical aesthetics in both fields. The interface between religion and arts is also exemplified by the "ethos" created at some "leisure/religious/art/crafts/shopping/dining" places in Colombo.



Buddhist relics were hidden in this rock, by an ancient Buddhist king of Rohunu Rata.
To the right you see an altar at the medieval temple Embekke.

1.2.2 Public Expressions of Buddhist Religion

In the archaeological history of Sri Lankan religious art, one sees a movement from the abstract and ideational into more and more personified forms. For instance the first symbols for Buddhist worship were the casket at the top of a bell-shaped dagoba filled with treasuries and a piece of the remains of Lord Buddha, as well as the sacred footprints made by Buddha on his many travels (through the air) after his enlightenment, or a variety of representations of these. The wheel, symbol of the wheel of eternal life (samsara), the bo- tree and lotus flower are also ancient symbols of worship – enlightenment. The oldest stone-carved statues of a personified Buddha that are found in Sri Lanka were made about 600–700 years after Buddha's birth (in the year of 456 B.C.) (Coomeraswamy (1924 (1985)). The Bo-tree in Anhuradhapura is a branch from the Bo-tree under which Buddha was enlightened, in Buddhagaya, North India. The iconic representation of Buddhism has thus developed from an ideational notion of Buddha as a being of an abstract non-form (he did after all transcend mortal laws) into a personified divinity. Today, Buddha is most commonly regarded and symbolised as a bold shaven headed man with "Asian" features, pale skinned, inscrutable

eyes wrapped up in a (saffron coloured) robe, as someone at peace. His hands, feet and body postures are indexical with the different stages of enlightenment portrayed by the icon. The substantial relation between the icon and the artist in its creation is considered important for the "potency" of the object. An artist producing Buddha images must therefore be "pure". He (the Citra who traditionally belongs to the Bereva caste) must truthfully observe the eight precepts before completing the statue, that is to say, painting the eyes on the icon. The moment chosen must of course be astrologically beneficial (nakati), as must be the direction the icon faces when having its first glimpse of this world.

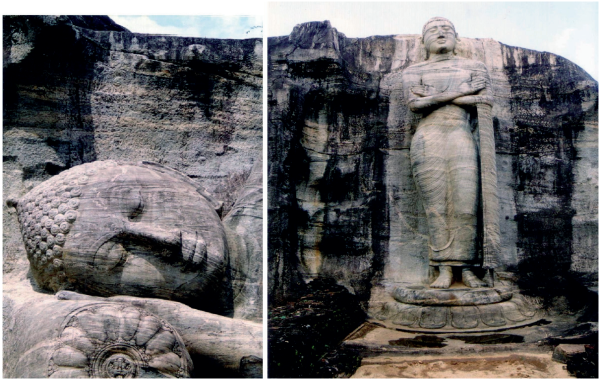
At the national airport, travellers are subjected to national Buddhist "propaganda". In the hall the government runs a bookstore that sells Buddhist literature, a great collection of icons picturing Buddha, common gifts for the monks such as fans, robes and umbrellas, and other Buddhist "promotional" material. Similar shops run by the government are placed in central towns all over the country. Moreover, Buddhist saffron-robed priests are easily recognised in public. From the central island and south–west and eastwards, there are today ten thousand white dagobas for Buddhist worship all over the landscape. Most of these are relatively new, and they come in various shapes and sizes – and are encircled by flowers, lights and incense offering altars upon which saffron coloured Buddha statues are standing. Moreover, there are many Bo-tree shrines which are delimited by white concrete walls, often with altars for local deities in each corner and with the stems "showered" with Buddhist flags. Many of these tree shrines are kept by village monks, others by devotees. Local and international tourists are efficiently guided into the "cultural triangle" in Sri Lanka, to the centres of ancient Buddhist kingdoms; Anhuradhapura, Pollunaruva and Kandy in particular. The cultural triangle is a part of the conservation scheme of the "world heritage" program of UNESCO. When driving through villages and towns the many statues and monuments placed at the junctions define the ethnic religious sympathies of the people living there, as if local religion territorializes space through the media of religious monumentalism. In his work on the cult of the goddess Pattini (1984), G. Obeyesekere shows how the temples of the guardian (varanam) and border (Bandara) divinities defined the centres and borders of ancient socio/political polities. Today, the frequent presence of public religious iconic/indexical representations in the physical landscape, thus works in a similar way as it forms an imaginary map of the territories of religious communities within the Lankan state.



Scene while shopping for the Vesak celebration at a local market. Cards with Buddhist greetings, statues, flags, lamps and Buddhist icons



A common bo- tree shrine for Buddhist worship. Shrines such as these are maintained and used by the villagers living nearby



Buddhist heritage monuments of Buddha, Gal Vihara in Pollunaruva



Modern murals by Soliyas Mendis at Kelaniya temple.



Golden Buddha statues presented to the Temple of (Buddha's) tooth in Kandy by other Buddhist nations.

1.3 Pilgrimages

The average Sri Lankan citizen is a religious person and from an early age children join their families on pilgrimages, far and near. It is very popular to participate in the annual temple festivals at the major temples – the time when processions displaying the caskets of holy relics and icons, ritual theatre and major dance offering ceremonies are on. My network of informants has taken me to four important Buddhist pilgrim destinations/temple festivals: Katarangama, Kandy, Adams Peak and Dondra. How important the religious festivals really are in Sri Lanka was brought home to me when an officer that I interviewed at the Ministry of Hindu Cultural Affairs at the outset of my fieldwork introduced me to the basics of Hindu religion and gave me a list of the important gods of worship (Shiva, Amman, Murugan) and a map of the location of their central temples in Sri Lanka and a time schedule for the key temple festivals. The Ministry of Buddhism and Cultural Affairs turned out to support similar activities for the Buddhists.

Important Hindu gods such as Vishnu, Brahma, Uma, Murugan, Ganesha and Kali, take a central place in the Buddhist pantheon and common temple grounds of worship for Hindus and Buddhists are widespread. Religious syncretism takes many forms in Sri Lanka, including

at Katarangama in the south-eastern region of the island for instance. Here Hindus, Buddhists, Christians and Muslims carry out acts of worship. The footprint at the mountain is believed by Buddhists, Christians and Hinduists to belong to Buddha, Adam or Shiva[7]. The place is as such another syncretistic place of worship. The acts of worship and the names of the gods of worship at these places differ according to the traditions known to the devotees and to the families of the priests in charge of the shrines. Moreover, it is not common for instance to see a Buddhist visit the Muslim shrine at Katarangama, or to see a Hindu take the walk around a recently made dagoba. Some of the very important Hindu temples under Tamil patronage are the Shiva temple in Trincomale, the Murugan temple in Jaffna and the Amman temple in Molativu, but many Tamils also perceive the Catholic Church in Mannar for the Virgin Mother as an important place of worship. As the habit of local religious syncretism shows, Sri Lankans have a very pragmatic attitude to religion, but nevertheless, the acts of worship in the shrines evidently remain distinct. (Frydenlund, 2003).

As a "leisure activity", pilgrimages for a Lankan provide an opportunity for the same sort of social/aesthetic experience as I had in my early student years when travelling to major rock/pop music festivals around Europe. On the way to the festivals we socialised with others heading for the same destination. As we were all dressed up in black, khaki or batik clothes and backpacks, it was easy to spot each other on the way. Our dress was an imitation of the style of the grunge or Indie pop bands that we adored, and many had also adopted the drinking and drug diet of their musical idols. Correspondingly, a Sinhala Buddhist on pilgrimage wears white or light coloured clothes which are often decorated with a piece of cloth in the colour of the leading deity at the temple they are heading for. Some also wear complete costumes that imitate the dress of the gods they are devoted to. The pilgrims eat and drink a "godly diet" which they observe throughout a defined period before they set out on the pilgrimage. For a Lankan Buddhist this means that that they commonly abstain from "impure" food (such as fried food), meat and alcohol. A Lankan pilgrimage is in other words much healthier than a trip to a music festival.

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[7] Markus Aksland 1990, gives an in-depth description of the various traditions of worship that are connected with the pilgrimages to Sri Pada/Adams Peak. Iselin Frydenlund, at the University of Oslo (2003) has written a very good major thesis on religious syncretism at Katarangama.

Rock/pop music festivals are a place celebrating youth, fun, musical experience and flirtation. Many young pilgrims correspondingly get involved in an innocent flirt on their journey, but sexual activities are a ritual taboo in relation to Buddhist worship practice. Parents and grandparents take the acts of worship far more seriously than their juniors and are in general much more knowledgeable on religious issues. Territorial movements are an important feature of both music festival culture and pilgrimages, but instead of drifting for days and nights from concert to concert, or from festival to festival, a pilgrim's route goes by important temples, and at the shrines the devotees perform a wide range of intricate acts of worship appropriate to that particular god at that particular spot, before moving on to the next one. Another comparable feature between crowded Sri Lankan pilgrimages and major music festivals is the basic camping and dining facilities offered. The greatest blessing achieved during a pilgrimage as well as at a music festival, is at the moment of completing one's mission. My personal objective was to hear my favourite band playing the closing concert at a festival. The same night I had by chance got hold of some "artist camp" passes, a surprising invitation for "star strucking" moments. The pilgrims get the chance to be close to the "divinely charged" iconic representations of their idols at the shrine. In some cases the goal of the journey could also be just to ring a bell, make a wish and crack a coconut, or to see a glimpse of a sacred relic. It seems like the greater the effort one faces, or the more obstacles one has to overcome in order to meet one's idols (or their iconic/indexical representations), the greater the happiness gained.[8]

Music festivals and Lankan temple festivals have, in other words, more things in common apart from idol worship. So far, I have addressed some features of the physicality of the "cults", and some clues about the "experiences" it is possible to achieve. I emphasise that the duration of the events is important in relation to the possibility of subjective transformations, "the sensus communis" to use the ritual theoretician Victor Turner's (1969 (1995)) phrase, achieved in the participants as they go on for many days and nights in a row.

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[8] Valentine Daniel (1987) gives very good description of a pilgrimage and the way such a journey includes several stages of transcendental experiences in Tamil Nadu.

Both events have elements of music and dance – and as such both form "musical socialites". In the grand temple processions there are many orchestras and dancers performing, and at the end of a pudjava – an offering to the gods – there is also an element of offering of sound involved, such as the cacophonous ringing of bells. Due to its cacophonous nature, just like some particular drum sequences known by my Adura informants, the rhythm and sound of the bell can efficiently put people into a trance. I suppose that people high on ecstasy in the "dance tent" at the Glastonbury festival also achieve some sort of bodily experience that is out of the ordinary. The soundscape at religious festivals in Sri Lanka is moreover an encompassing part of the experience because at the top of the sacred mountain Adams Peak/Sri Pada or in the fields of Katarangama, the organisers play religious "pop" music loudly over the speaker system day and night.

Abhinawagupta (Gnoli 1956), who I will return to in my chapter on the ritual Rata Yakuma, argues that aesthetic and divine experiences are qualitatively different. What he means is that to be pleased by an aesthetic experience, is different to being in touch with the divine. The musical performance at Western festivals charges the youthful spirit of its audience, just as the musical spectacle does for pilgrims at temple festivals. However, the music idols are not capable of transgressing human limitations, neither are they capable of interfering with human destinies in the way that the godly idols can – it is impossible to be embodied by them. (If you are, you are diagnosed as mentally sick). The aims of a pilgrimage for the Hindu or Buddhist are therefore quite different from the ends sought by the concert audience. A pilgrimage is carried out primarily as an act of pleading for the goodwill of the gods, a journey for the improvement of one's karmic position in this and forthcoming lives. It is the performance of serial acts of devotion carried out within a defined time and space. Due to the potential of the aesthetic medias employed however, both music festivals and temple festivals create generative, life enhancing social scapes.



Pilgrims waiting for the sun to rise at Sri Pada. Buddha's footprint is inscribed on the rock somewhere under the shrine



.. and a monk residing in the Japanese temple at the foot of the mountain Sri Pada, greets the rising sun with an offering of sound

1.4 Snapshots. Contemporary Expressions of the Tovils in Popular Culture

In relation to the many institutions of Buddhist promotion and preservation of practice; the "Tovil system" which my study concerns is a marginal ritual practice and is only put into play on "extraordinary" occasions. In everyday life there are many competing and dominating "spiritual" practices to which Lankan subjects are attracted. As the demons

(Yakku) and ghosts (Pretea) offered to in the Tovils are considered highly impure, malevolent, and bring about illnesses, they have never had any permanent shrines or altars built on their behalf. The shrines (Vidiya) created for the Tovil rituals are thus essentially temporary and are destroyed immediately after the event. The Yakas have in other words no shrines but "roam" about, and "dwell" at crossroads, near to water, in the bush and churchyards. Some are active at midday, others at midnight. The most common public sign of the supernaturals addressed in the cult of the "Tovil system" are the wooden Raksea/Yaka masks. These masks are used in the rites, but are also very popular collector's items and easily purchased at the many shops selling traditional crafts. The old ones are given status as antiques and the local museums have great collections. The newly fabricated ones are mostly sold as souvenirs.



Gara Yaka, at a village-harvesting rite, Gammaduva, in Akuressa

The mask of the Gara Yaka is commonly seen placed over the entrance door of new houses. The Gara Yaka is connected with wealth and prosperity. To my knowledge, this is the only mask "charged" with divine powers of protection and therefore one of the few which the Lankans have any interest in owning for religious purposes.

The many different events in which the Aduras performed were situated within a geographically large area. Therefore I also travelled a lot. There were rituals in Trincomale, Anhuradhapura, Ratnapura, Hambantota, Colombo, Morawaka and many more places to which I travelled. The travels were in many ways not just between villages and towns, but were also journeys in time, from a subsistence economy to capitalism, between poverty and

wealth. It makes sense to say that the centre of the "Tovil system" is the fishing and farming villages in the south of Sri Lanka, and that the capital of Colombo is in the periphery of the cult. The frequent movement by my Adura informants to basically any province in Sri Lanka, as well as their acceptance of new arenas and media for their performances, and the many teaching institutions for their art form established outside the southern province makes the question of a possible redefinition of the centre and borders of the "Tovil system" plausible in some not too distant future. When I met the troupe of the first "traditional art show" I saw performed in Colombo in 1996, I discovered they had travelled from Matara in the back of a cattle van. By comparison, the troupe that I met in 2001 had travelled in a private van. The difference in rules of demeanour shown to the Aduras performing at these different events, were striking. At the first show the Aduras were presented as an anonymous group of performers of traditional dance (Larsen 1998) and treated as low caste ritual performers. At the second, the Aduras who performed were both addressed by their name and artistic achievements, and they took and were given the role of highly esteemed artists. Adding these findings together, it is plausible to claim that the many new media for the public distribution of the aesthetic regime of the "Tovil system" have greatly enhanced its popularity and its position in contemporary popular culture.

In chapter 5, I will go through an example of an extensive ritual of the "Tovil system" and consider some of the historical features of the system and demonstrate the way it engages with many aspects of Lankan religious and social life. In the last section of the thesis I also address the institutional and aesthetical aspects of recent developments and social/economic/religious/cultural/aesthetic possibilities for continuity and change. The images here to be presented are points of reference for the discussion to follow, and show some glimpses of the contemporary "distribution" of the aesthetic regime of the "Tovil system".



The Aduras, ritual specialists and dancers of the Tovil ritual system are the key informants of this work. Here some of them are on the way to a five-day long "tour" to Colombo from Matara, which included a public show in Maharagama, a private Suniyama rite at Dehivala, and a live television arts show in Battaramulla. There were 4 generations of Aduras in the group; the youngest 11, the oldest 82.



This image is from a traditional art show in Akuressa in the autumn of 2001. The presence of the monks at an "entertaining" traditional arts show of the kind pictured above was quite controversial in relation to the proper rules of conduct for a monk and was commented on by the Aduras and others as highly significant and important. To me this fact is evidence that the "Tovil system" as a Buddhist religious system has recently achieved a high status among

the clergy in the Sinhala Buddhist community. This is because the "worldly" orientation towards laukika, as opposed to the monks' dedicated orientation towards the other worldly lokottara, of the "Tovil system" and the impurity of the supernaturals engaged, had previously caused monks to avoid any interaction or affiliation with the "Tovil system". Their presence was justified to me by emphasising that the show served an important Buddhist goal. The show was a "shanti karmaya", a rite for the pleasing of the mind – a state of mind that enables the realisation of Buddhist ideals.





This dance from the "Tovil system", the "Vadige Patuna", narrates the visit by Indian Brahmins who come with powerful mantras (charms) for curing, to the patient of the Suniyama rite. The Suniyama rite breaks the spell of sorcery for individual subjects. The first picture shows Aduras performing the act at a Suniyama rite in the Hambantota district. The

dance act is today also very popular among "traditional dancers", and in the second photo you see some young girls that chose the dance item for the regional dance competition in the southern province in the category of traditional low-country dance, as representatives for their local village dance school (Kala Yatana).



This shot is from a mask dance performance at the Kandyan Culture Centre. The mask is a portrait of Gurula, the mythological vehicle bird of the god Vishnu and as far as I know does not "appear" in any contemporary Tovil ritual. There are many traditional dance shows like the one viewed in Kandy, for both locals and foreign tourists, but the show in Kandy was the only one that had shows running daily for many years during the period of my research.



Separate from the "Tovil system", but a part of the Buddhist annual celebration of the birthday of Buddha, Tovil masks have influenced the creation of VESAK MASKS in papier-mâché. This is an image of Lisa Kois's private collection. These artistic creations playing on the imagery concepts of animals include Koalam characters, Halloween, Disney, Tibetan demons and Tovil masks.



A new costume for the Aduras? An interpretation of a ritual dress made by the fashion designer Devanmini Wickremaratne. In the Sunday Observer Magazine 09.11.03. In other words, the Tovil aesthetics also inspire contemporary fashion.



This is an image of the Adura Somatilleka performing at a traditional arts show in Kekkenedura in 1996. This very night was the first time I ever saw an Adura in performance. It was an all-night show, and as the only white foreigner present I and my local assistant got the front seat. This dance/drama act originates from the Rata Yakuma rite to be described in chapters 5 and 6, and the act mimics the Riddi Princess having a bath and dressing up.



In comparison, this is an image of a pregnant woman carrying the offering to the abortion causing spirit Kalu Kumarea (the black prince) on her head, in the Tovil rite Rata Yakuma.

This patient had had trouble conceiving a child, and the rite was carried out in order to secure safe delivery as promised to “the black prince” in return for him giving up his influence on the patient’s body. This is in other words an image of “Tovil dance” in its original curing rite setting. The image of Somatilleka above depicts the somewhat recent, contemporary movement of ritual acts between the Tovil rite context and the “traditional art shows”. Tovil aesthetics are, as these examples illustrate, both popular as fashion and entertainment. However, due to the position of Buddhist religion and the fact that the audiences in all contexts here addressed are religious subjects, the aesthetics of the “Tovil system” continue to be ethically and religiously perceived – consumed within the “ethos” of Buddhist Popular Culture.

1.5 Expressions of Religious Worlds and Shopping

1.5.1 Colombo, Shopping and Religion

Although there are certain similarities, Colombo is very different from any southern town in Sri Lanka. Colombo, which was once a cluster of small villages and paddy fields, “pitiyas”, has grown into a modern South Asian “metropolis”. The colonial history is present in its monumental historical buildings and the architecture in the old centre by the fort, but the town has developed greatly since my first visit in 1996, and due to the civil war situation and the location of the local political and military facilities in the fort area, the “business and pleasure zone” today occupies Bambalapitiiya, Kolupitiya and the Town Hall area. The shops to be discussed here are all located near the Galle road, between the Kolupitiya and Bambalapitiya junctions. The following cases are illustrative of how local religious concepts are fused with other popular cultural expressions and concepts of shopping. The first case shows how popular the aesthetics of “Tovil dance” really are through the case of an Indian beauty queen who was out shopping one day at the Crest Cat shopping centre. The second and third cases show how two shops are quite alike but are still significantly different commercial businesses whose design is inspired by religious aesthetic concepts. I have seen both dance performances and exhibitions inspired by the “Tovil system” at these places but as you will see, the system has a minor influence on the religious aesthetic concepts of the owners.

1.5.2 The Crest Cat

Regularly on Sundays there are pop musicians playing on a stage put up outside the Crest Cat shopping centre at Galle Rd in Colombo 2, a centre connected with one of the grand five-star international hotels near Galleface green. The stage fronts the main entry of the building. It is placed just opposite the veranda of the (authentic) French Bakery café. The musicians are often dressed up in pastel coloured suits and play the particular sort of soft pop music that is loved by the local audience. The performances are often sponsored by international brands and the event includes a fashion show of new collections, or is put together to promote the last CD of the entertaining band. In addition to the shopper-crowd, journalists from a local television or radio-station are usually present. In fact, these events are often broadcast on local television and radio. The show attracts local youths of the age of 15–25 coming from the upper middle class and higher, as well as the children of the families of the international workforce on business, diplomatic, UN or NGO missions. The context offers a symbiotic event – a mixture of exclusive shopping culture and pop music in a place to hang out and socialise on an otherwise boring Sunday. Inside the shopping centre one finds many imported goods of high quality and contemporary design, which are appreciated by people from the "international" upper middle class. There is a bookshop with local and imported books, magazines and newspapers in English, a local antique shop, Indian and Lankan produced souvenirs, locally produced handlooms and clothing, copied and real jewellery and much more. In the basement one can buy a diversity of Asian takeaway food as well as Italian pizza and pasta. The grand event at the place when I did fieldwork in 2002 was a concert sponsored by the British Council with the Transglobal Underground. The music of the internationally celebrated Transglobal Underground is labelled in the "hybrid" or "world-music" genre and in expression it is a mixture of European, North African and North Indian song and tunes played over a synthesiser-sampled rhythm orchestra. The concert took place on the roof of the Crest Cat building and at that night the full moon in the sky created the backdrop of the stage. The average audience gathered at the venue was ten years older than those seen outside the shopping mall on a Sunday midday concert, and many non-Lankan languages were heard spoken on that particular night. The evening was inspired by the title of one of the records of the band: it was one in the history of the "Transnational times". One day at Crest Cat there was a rather impressive procession. The winner of the Miss World contest, Miss India/World was out shopping, and while walking

through the atrium from shop to shop, she was led from door to door by a ceremonial drum orchestra and dancers fully dressed up in the ceremonial outfit of the up-country style of the "Tovil system". At Crest Cat I learned that any queen gets a proper introduction. The ceremonial dimension of the "Tovil system" had proved relevant in yet another arena of performance.

1.5.3 Paradise Road

Adored by expatriates and Western immigrant workers as well as central politicians and their colleagues is Paradise Road at Bambalapitiya, Colombo 4. The place was formerly the house and studio office of a world renowned Sri Lankan architect, Bhawha, but today is owned and run by the designer Mr. Fernando. The complex includes the surrounding buildings of Bhawha's old office, which houses a shop, a gallery, a restaurant, and a small gift shop as well as office space for business administration. The architecture of the central building is perceived as one of the signal works of Bhawha, and its design is inspired by East-Asian temples of Buddhist worship. The buildings are made of heavy polished soot coloured cement floors and walls, which create a heavy impression, but which are balanced by the many bright "white washed" concrete walls. The roof is made of solid dark brown wooden beams. The shop selection offers imported interior design goods and "antiques" from Indonesia, and since its materials are solely made of heavy materials such as ceramics, glass and steel in natural or dark colours the things create a masculine impression. Not everything is imported though since they have their own collection of porcelain breakfast and dinner sets and textiles from Sri Lanka. When returning in 2003, the shop was selling imported Chinese furniture, glass, boxes, and porcelain vases as well as paintings. You could even get imported wall hangings in silk material with embroidered images of Tibetan Buddhas surrounded by protecting demons and deities. Dark natural colours feature strongly in the choice of fabrics they sell for a variety of decorative and functional purposes. And this is one of the few places on the island where one can find high quality wax-candles shaped, for instance, like lotus flowers. Moreover, the shop has a great collection of "new age" literature giving information on how to achieve spiritual health, mixed with coffee-table books on interior decoration, architecture and arts. The staff at the shop and the restaurant are all young men who wear traditional dress, though the colours are unusual since they wear black and grey sarongs and black cotton shirts. Images of Buddha in various sizes, materials and

styles are found in the shop and for decoration. In contrast to this, the music played over the speakers is gothic church music. Their choice of "Music for shopping" strikes me therefore as appealing to those with a solemn, contemplative and structured mind.

The shop and restaurant are located in two separate buildings and in order to enter the restaurant you have to pass through the car-park and enter the gallery cafe building through a hallway where two giant flower vessels made of cement, full of lotus flowers, are placed on each side. Such vessels are commonly used to mark the entrance to South Asian temple grounds and their position sets the stage. The lotus flower is a symbol for the birth of Buddha. The passage leads into the centre of the complex, the art gallery. The gallery space is located in an open backyard. The surrounding house walls and fence serve as the exhibition space. On the ground of the yard there are two rectangular lotus ponds in which carp and goldfish swim around, with a tiled pathway between them and at the sides. On the side of one of the ponds there is a square space covered with gravel and stones which has associations with "Zen Buddhist" garden design. The curator has a preference for paintings inspired by the expressionist period of modern art and this influences the choice of works exhibited. The restaurant is situated in a semi roofed/open garden space. The furniture is coloured in grey, black and shades of brown, and it is made of ironwork, polished cement and leather. A grand-sized old bible is displayed on the shelf by the small entry hallway between the gallery and restaurant with a tall white lighted candle placed by its side. Controlled, contemplative and formal social attitudes tincture the atmosphere. The food served is basically from the Southern-European kitchen. There is a hybrid religious influence in the design and commodities on display, a mixture of new age thought, Christianity and Buddhism. The many imported objects from East Asia show a fusion of the expressionist arts and the influence of the South European kitchen. The preference shown for natural materials such as wood, leather, cotton, white bone china and ceramics is not accidental. In other words, this is not just a place for shopping and eating, but one with primarily sensory experiences and religious orientations in view. The place offers guides, tastes and the "perfect" objects for the staging of an ideal, sensible life, the mental religious state and orientation for subjective contemplation as the designer and owner Mr. Fernando perceives it.

1.5.4 Barefoot. The Garden of Those In-between

The garden of those in-between is the name I gave the textile outlet and gallery Barefoot, unaware of Michael Roberts (1994) reference to the Burghers of Lanka as "those in between". The place is run by Mrs. Sansoni and her son, and as such is run by a family of Dutch-Lankan decent – Burghers. The reason why I chose the concept was however not with the descent of the owners in mind, but because in this garden I continuously met Lankans who for various reasons had left the island and lived abroad for a while, returning as visitors or people who had come in order to live out their dream of a final return.

Barefoot was funded by architect and designer Mrs. Sansoni as an outlet for her fabrics with distinct stunning colour combinations and patterns. The threads used in the fabrics, are dyed by hand in Colombo and sent to India to be woven and the fabrics are then transformed again in Sri Lanka into clothes of "traditional look" such as sarongs and blouses of various widths and lengths as well as furniture covers, pillows, table cloths and funny animals for children. Mrs. Sansoni lives in the USA and is responsible for their American branch. Her son, Mr. Sansoni, is an internationally acclaimed photographer, his documentary work from Sri Lanka and the Asian region is outstanding and of great documentary value, and he is the manager of the Sri Lankan office. At the shop one will therefore find a collection of his photos printed as postcards, as well as many books illustrated by him. Mr. Sansoni has a passion for collecting antiques, and in the garden one finds ancient pieces of carved stones, an ivory log, old wooden furniture, colourful doors and a wall, all of which seem accidentally put together, but which are in fact carefully chosen. His wife runs the bookstore and the gallery.

The "Cosmological Map" of the "Barefoot" Garden is as Follows:
The café is located in the centre and forms the axis mundi of the "Barefoot" cosmos.
It serves the basic needs of those "in between".

The god Yama protects the gate in the southern direction. Yama is thus the gatekeeper between the garden of those in between and the mundane world.

The god Ganesha protects the gate to the northern shop and bookstore: The stone image of Ganesha is placed in the small lotus pond by the doorstep. He protects the gate leading to wisdom (the bookstore) and heaven (the colourful sales collection).

The goddess Sarasvati protects the eastern door, the door leading to the field of vision: the gallery exhibit halls.

The bar and shed of spiritual guidance in the western corner of the garden is protected by "the superintendent." The superintendent administers the design of form and sound in the garden universe as the producer of exhibitions and through his DJ activities.

Like Paradise Rd, Barefoot specialises in interior design. Fabrics are their main commodities but they also sell silver jewellery and clothes, books, food, arts and antiques. Where Paradise Rd gives a strict impression of structure and control, Barefoot represents chaos. Where Paradise Rd is a finished enclosed place of monumental minimalism in design, "Barefoot" just keeps on being redecorated, things and walls are moved around and the complex continuously expands its territory. Needless to say, the colours are those of Hindu temples, tropical birds, flowers and coral reefs, colours of the sun and of fun. For the children you get fabulous fabrics transformed into all kinds of jungle animals, such as elephants, crocodiles and mice. The bookshop specialises in South Asian literature, and both Paradise Rd and Barefoot attract English-speaking customers. At Barefoot they also have a solid collection of academic work on Sri Lanka. The furniture and things on offer at Paradise Rd are from East Asia, while the goods at Barefoot are mainly imported from India. When I first visited the gallery/shop in 1996, the cafe was just a small veranda with four butterfly chairs of leather, facing a lotus-pond with goldfish and the stone sculptured Ganesha. In the cafe they served Sprite, Coke, coffee or tea. When returning in 1999 the garden had "grown" and was much bigger as they had bought the neighbouring property and they had included an old neighbouring building for the gallery and a backyard where the carpenters who refurbished antiquities could work. Throughout this period the restaurant gradually evolved. In 2003 the "road" passing outside the fence was integrated into the garden. They had moved the fence and covered it with a ceiling, and this was the last expansion that I have on record.

Barefoot is run by Christians, but Christians with a taste for South Asian religious aesthetics, which is different from the owner of Paradise Rd, who is into "New Age" and East-Asian Buddhist architecture and design. The book collection at Barefoot is not only on arts, design and "new age spiritualism" but also on Sociology, Sri Lankan politics, literature, and history. There is also a science section and books on the Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Christian

religions. In addition to being such central figures in the local development of architecture, design and arts, the owners of Barefoot and Paradise Rd have done a very decent job as private art and antique collectors. Their interest has revitalised the design of local crafts such as stone carving, woodcarving, brass-work etc. They are both involved in the refurbishment of many old objects, houses and buildings. Due to the lack of public funds for the conservation of antiques and old buildings, and the absence of a public fund for the collection of contemporary arts, the owners play a very important role in the field of cultural conservation. Like Paradise Rd, the Barefoot concept invites one to taste a varied sensory experience, but its aesthetics are open, vivid, light, and colourful and encourage cheerful social gatherings, whereas the aesthetics of Paradise Rd cultivate private spiritual contemplation.

1.6 Concluding Remarks

I hope that my glimpses of Buddhism in "Popular Culture" have helped shed light on the interrelation between religious concepts and aesthetic creations in Popular Culture and have served my intention of giving an understanding of the extensive timeline, the temporality, creativity, variation and iconic surface that characterises the field. The cases are fragmented, yet interrelated, as they are all examples of expressions of religious worlds in Popular Culture. At the beginning of this chapter I introduced Toby Bennett's definition of culture, i.e. a: "historically specific set of institutionally embedded relations of government in which forms of thought and conduct of extended populations are targeted for transformation – partly via the extension through the social body of forms, techniques and regimens of a aesthetic and intellectual culture in relation to discourses of moral regulation" (Ibid., 1992: 26). In Sri Lanka the interrelation between the state, religion and popular culture has a long history. Through our glimpses we have learned that the common iconic representations of Buddhist religion are the bell, the dagoba, wheel, lotus flower, bo-tree and the image of Buddha himself in various enlightened states. Moreover, the government supports temples, temple festivals and pilgrimages, as well as dance shows, dance schools and dance competitions. There is massive support for important religious heritage sites which continue to be used as important places of worship, and the government is the producer of religious replicas, literature and icons and has established outlets all around the country, and also at

the airport. I have shown that the distribution of Buddhist aesthetics comes both in the compositional form of music (pilgrimage example), dance ("Tovil dance"), visual (icons) and material culture (design) as well as intellectual culture – books and other sources. The religious dimension of these aesthetics brings in the notion of discourses on a high degree of moral regulation. Moreover, I have shown with the examples of the tree shrines, the vesak masks, the fashion show, the exhibition and the two shops with religiously inspired business concepts that religious ideography is not only popularised by means of state interventions, but also creatively engaged with, produced and distributed through independent institutions and subjects.

In other words, Buddhist arts, visual arts, shopping culture and other popular phenomena are part of the cultural/religious context that interfaces with the "Tovil system". The "Tovil system" is, in my understanding, not just a doctrinal system serving curative ends and passing the divine blessing of prosperity to all, but also an aesthetic regime, and as such it is able to transcend the borders given its religious context of origin and be distributed through new media and employed in many sorts of concepts of cultural performances. As a Buddhist aesthetic regime "Tovil dance" continues to stand in an indexical relationship with all beings of this world (laukika). In the following chapters I will follow up this perspective further, and look into how the "Tovil system" influences contemporary theatre as well as public ceremonial practice, and will consider how the developments have changed the ritual procedures of one particular Tovil rite, the Rata Yakuma. In the last section of this thesis I will look into how "Tovil dance" in fact has achieved a position as a hegemonic kinaesthetic language of the Buddhist Sinhalese.

2 FIELD CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Features of the Research Process

In the following I set out to give a short introduction of my key "field plots" in Sri Lanka located in the Southern Province and the Colombo area. I will also give a short introduction to the socio- political situation in Sri Lanka during my fieldwork period. The research carried out for this PhD thesis is a continuation of the work done for my major degree and hereunder I consequently also address some of the methodological challenges and features of both. I carried out "travelling fieldwork" within a professional network of dance specialists and cultural bureaucrats, and some of the methodological problems and positive outcomes thereof will be addressed. During the fieldwork years I worked with many different assistants, and in addition to the common methodological problems faced in relation to the actual translation activities I will describe how the search for and work with several assistants enlightened me on how my national identity and female sex, as well as the ideas of low caste "pollution" and the uncanny nature of the work of my informant Aduras, had an impact on the research results. Lastly, the work does not depend on field observations and interviews alone, but also on thorough research on ritual texts and secondary literary sources that are in need of clarification. But first I present an introduction to the country in which the fieldwork was conducted; Sri Lanka.

2.1.2 "Sri Lanka,

is a beautiful place" is a common saying as its landscape as well as its people's fortunate appearance have stunned visitors for ages. Sri Lanka is a spectacular tropical island with high mountains, steep hills and valleys, waterfalls, tropical fruit and spice gardens, dry zones, rainforest, coral reefs and white sandy beaches. The earth nourishes stunning cinnamon, coconut and banana-tree gardens, endless numbers of blossoming trees of wonderful forms and joyful colours as well as scattered spots of green rice-paddy-fields which dine on white bright tropic daylight and chilling monsoon rain. Moreover, the rich fauna includes a good collection of important medicinal plants, whose ingredients are extracted and used in

advanced Ajurvedic medical treatments. In the central land, gorgeously cultivated tea-plantations and scenic waterfalls adorn steep hills and valleys, and the curved landscape of the south and southwest region is full of white bell-shaped dagobas that are places of Buddhist worship. In the picturesque landscape of tropical trees and plants live many rare species of jungle animals and paradise birds. If you are lucky, you might at twilight come across thousands of crabs mating in the shallow waves or get a glimpse of those elderly fellows of the sea world, sea turtles, nesting in the shade of coconut palm trees; you might spot wild elephants, water buffalos or leopards leaping out of the bush at water holes, or watch a paradise bird wander about a charming paddy-land.

The soundscape of an evening in a shanty fishing town is composed of the rustling sound of leaves moved by the cooling breeze, the rhythm of waves hitting the beach, the chirping sound of crickets and grasshoppers, tweeting seductive gekkos in search of flies and mates, howling owls, hissing snakes, barking dogs, cars, creaking bicycle wheels and pedals, conversing voices, TV sets and the muffled sound of cow, dog, rat, (pole-) cat and human feet padding about. At twilight the birds return to their night roosts. Each species occupies different trees in the town and at dusk the bird's cheerful briefing on the events of the day dominates all other sounds. Another common sound comes from the speakers at the mosque when the mullahs call their flock to prayer five times a day, and sometimes in the morning and at night the voices of the Bhikku reciting "pirit" (prayers) are played aloud as well. The sounds are dry, toneless and muted in the moist air, and it is as if each sound moves at its own speed, with an individual rhythm, melody and frequency. The air is filled with the scent of chilli hot-coconut oil-curry-spiced evening meals, perfumed incense smoke seeping from house and temple altars, jasmine and many other blossoming trees; however, all mixed with the stink of smelly garbage and sewage. It is frenetic, noisy, quiet, delightful, fresh, timeless and polluted.

Envisage the island about a hundred and fifty years ago, before the invention of modern technological devices such as lights, cars, trains and planes which transformed human mobility, but also our cognitive perception. Due to the geographical location close to the equator the people living in Sri Lanka experience a full yearly cycle of 12-hour long days and nights. The colour and matted texture of dark nights is not always coal black, but shifts from

complete black into shades of blue in accordance with the movement of the sun as its sunbeams hit and spark down onto the earth by way of the moon.

The first settlement took place about 28000 years ago and the people of early history lived as hunters and gatherers, living on the tropical plants, fruits, roots and vegetables and meat. Much later, small kingdoms evolved, and the written history of the island, the Mahavamsa, starts out some two hundred years before the Ashoka period, 3rd century BC. Asoka was an Indian conqueror who subjugated most parts of South Asia, and history has it that it was his son, Mahinda, that introduced Theravada Buddhism to the king of Anhuradhapura and his consorts. He also brought with him a branch of the sacred Bo tree of Bodigaya in North India, the tree under which Buddha attained enlightenment, and planted it in Anuradhapura. The tree has been carefully nurtured ever since. The Buddhist doctrine was passed on in Pali and Sanskrit, languages of the Indo European language group, and the local language Sinhala is highly influenced by the two. Simultaneously on the island, Hindu kingdoms evolved, Muslim settlements were established and in the early "modern period" Christian colonisers came, and again the Lankan religious-socio-political landscape was transformed.

The island has differing climatic zones shaped by the southwest and northeast monsoon rain, including desert land in the southeast and stretches of rainforest in the central land. Since the island is blessed with two periods of monsoon rain, and the central highlands are hit by both, it is therefore possible to harvest two crops yearly in some areas. However, the weather has its own ways and for extensive periods the monsoons have failed, and drought set in. Electricity is made by hydro systems, so in periods of drought the population not only have to deal with a short supply of water, but also a paucity of electric power. Lack of water, fans, lighting and refrigeration limits many sorts of work. More than two thousand years ago, local engineers took action against the long periods of drought, and built a huge water tank system in the northwest. It enabled the grand civilisation of Anhuradhapura to develop in this otherwise very dry zone of the island.

Sinhalese, Tamils, and Muslims (Moors) are today the main ethnic groups living on the island. Sinhala, the spoken language of the Sinhalese has Sanskrit as its origin. Sanskrit is a northern Indian Indo-Eurasian language. This language is distinct from the languages spoken

in South India. Tamil as spoken in Tamil Nadu, is a language that belongs to the Dravidian language group. It is thought though that a form of Dravidian language was also spoken in the northern part of the south Asian region in the time before the Aryan invasion, before the extension of the Indus valley civilisation to Pakistan and Northern India, and as such it is an older language than Sanskrit in the region. Local Muslims have Tamil as their primary social language, but many Muslim businessmen speak Arabic, Tamil, and Sinhalese as well as English fluently.

Out of a population numbering 19 million (in 2001), about 81% are ethnic Sinhalese, 10% Tamils and 8% Muslims. The numbers however are somewhat uncertain due to the civil war situation which hinders access to some populated areas up north. The Veddhas, or the aboriginal population, count for about 0.1 %.[9] Topographically, the island of Lanka is pear-drop shaped and at the northern peninsula it is just a short ferry trip to the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Colombo is the capital and has a population of about 1 million people. The second largest town in Sri Lanka is Kandy, the seat of the last kingdom of Sri Lanka. In Kandy there is an important monastery, a Buddhist tooth relic temple. The temple and the kingly compound next to it form one of three sites in the UNESCO funded cultural heritage project: "the cultural triangle". The two other sites are the stone ruins of ancient capitals of two other Buddhist kingdoms; Anhuradhapura and Polunaruwa. In addition to these three, the stone fortress of a Buddhist king: Sigriya and the cave temple of Dambulla are under the protection of the program. Jaffna is a northern town and in pre-colonial times it was the centre of the last standing Hindu kingdom on the island. My research was carried out in Colombo and in the southern districts of Matara and Galle. Along the coast from the North-East of Negombo to Koggalle in the South there are not only fishing communities but also many grand international holiday resorts and international free trade zones.

[9] Source: Census of Population and Housing 2001. Important LTTE controlled areas are left out of the statistics so there are far more Tamils in Sri Lanka than the statistics reveal (perhaps 17%).



Most of my fieldwork was carried out in the southern province of Sri Lanka and in Colombo, it is therefore necessary to present some facts and details about the places and their characteristics.

2.1.3 Colombo: The Modern City Plot

The Encyclopaedia Britannica describes Colombo as the administrative capital and commercial centre of Sri Lanka. The key facility of the city is the harbour, an internationally very important shipping port. "The earliest written mention of the port may be that of Fa-hsien, a Chinese traveller of the 5th century AD, who referred to the port as Kao-lan-pu. The Sinhalese called the port Kolamba, which the Portuguese thought was derived from the Sinhalese word for mango trees (kola, "leaves" ; amba, "mango"). A more likely explanation is that kolamba was an old Sinhalese word meaning "port" or "ferry." [10]. The city areas are given numbers where 1-8 is considered to be in the centre of the town. Central Colombo has more than 1 million inhabitants. The borders between the town areas are drawn between the old villages (pityas) that developed through time from feudal plots into the urban city. The physical environment was created throughout the colonial area, and in Colombo 1, one finds for instance the Dutch fort, the British colonial hotel and the old market. Up to the late 1980s Colombo 1 was the administrative and business centre of Sri Lanka but during my research period the area had restricted access due to the civil war situation and the many public buildings located there. However, the area south and east of Beira Lake developed greatly in the time span of 10 years that I visited Sri Lanka – the development of Duplication Rd was particularly significant, but also the Town Hall Area and Colombo 7.

During my research period the city maintenance in the area of Colombo 1 was temporarily put on hold and a very interesting mixed ethnic community of the poor and middle class Sri Lankans occupied the many shabby but still beautiful colonial buildings in the quarters. The place was to me a highly interesting creative hub to visit and I would have loved to do some work there. The open-air cinema was for instance quite popular, but so also was more traditional entertainment such as dance performances and bands playing in the streets. Another important feature of Colombo is the many green areas for leisure and fun that developed during the colonial era. The greens of Victoria Park and the field of Galle Face Green are the most popular places for recreation. There are also many sports fields, quarters, and parks scattered around the city and there are several swimming pools, cricket clubs and

[10] www.encyclopaedia.britannica.com 7th of September 2008

tennis clubs etc. However, despite Colombo's proximity to the sea, swimming is not popular since the waves that beat onto the shore are too rough.

I had frequent stays in the city during my first fieldwork and had my base there for about 8 months altogether during my PhD research. I lived in the area of Colombo 3 and 4. My own neighbourhood had, as a consequence, more of a "posh" and international business atmosphere than Colombo 1, but there were still poor beggars living on the streets or in shelters behind our house walls. Their numbers decreased during my stay in 1996 – 2006, and I suppose their living areas were more tightly controlled by the government in this period, because despite their disappearance from the main streets, the slum quarters of the Colombo suburbs experienced rapid growth. In order to get the context of my project right I interviewed very many people involved in the field of culture in Sri Lanka in Colombo (and elsewhere), and watched a wide range of cultural events of different genres. Still, the people and events linked to the creative pool of local dance traditions such as "Tovil dance" in particular attracted my closest attention. It was also the affiliations with the southern Aduras in Colombo that provided my most important informants here.

Moreover, my fieldwork map of Colombo was designed on the basis of three different concepts; important public bodies, important institutions for cultural production and then important academic institutions. Outside Colombo, in Colombo 10 and the parliament district Kotte, at Battaramulla on the 8^{th} floor, I regularly went to meet and to interview the officers working at the Cultural Ministry, the Department of Culture, and the Arts Council. I also managed to meet officers and carry out interviews at several other ministries dealing with cultural affairs and at the Cultural Central Fund – all public offices located in Colombo.

In order to narrow my research on cultural policy – and in order to be able to draw a valid link between the developments in the field of "Tovil dance" and public policy programs – I traced down as many Arts Council members of the board and dance committees as possible and interviewed them. In the end I had met about 12 informants who had been involved in the work of this body on dance issues – past and present. Dance competitions and annual festivals in different categories organised by the committees of the Arts Council in collaboration with the Department of Culture are important case material from my fieldwork

due to the fact that competitions and festivals were their most important activities. These cases became the key source of my knowledge on how the "preservation and promotion" of the heritage goal of the government was put into practice – and how these programs can affect change. Moreover, the cultural performances taken into consideration in this work were basically performed at the public institutions in the Town Hall area of Colombo – John De Silva in particular, or at the private institution Lionel Wendts.

I had kind support with my project from a wide range of Sri Lankan scholars working at a diversity of departments at the University of Keleniya, the University of Jayawardenapura and the University of Colombo. I also regularly attended seminars at the International Centre for Ethnical Studies and used their library for work. My contacts at the Department of Archaeology and the Institute of Aesthetic studies however became most important due to their expertise on cultural preservation and promotion matters. Moreover, the dance teachers at the Institute of Aesthetic Studies were heavily involved in the affairs of the Arts council and the implementation of public cultural activities and as such took on an additional role as key informants for this work.

My own homes (yes I had many) in Colombo became just places to write and rest. However, 'Barefoot', a mixed shop, gallery and restaurant complex that produced very many interesting social and cultural events, gradually grew into the "backstage" arena of my fieldwork in Sri Lanka. I do owe the owners, regular guests and employees of Barefoot much for their interest in my research, for their valuable input, and not least for their invaluable contacts. I suppose a study of the institution would have been both historical and very interesting indeed as it is one of the most successful and important private cultural institutions in Sri Lanka. The place is a key facilitator for events in the field of contemporary arts, photography and music – and the hang-out for many an artist working in the hybrid zone between "South Asian", local traditional and "fine arts". However, since it was my private zone in Sri Lanka, I did not carry out any research at the place myself. I will nonetheless mentioned 'Barefoot' briefly in chapter 1 as a case example of the interrelation between shopping and religion in popular culture.

2.1.4 The Southern Province: The Modern Asian Town and Rural Village Plot

The southern region stretches along the coast from Kalutara all the way up to Potuvil in the east, and Ratnapura to the north. The town where I lived during my fieldwork is a part of the Matara district, and houses about 22000 citizens. Out of these, 10000 are female and 7500 are youngsters under the age of eighteen. Most of the population in town are; "Sinhalese" and the karava community or fishermen are the dominant caste. However, about one third of its inhabitants are Moors (Muslims). As traders Moors occupy the very centre of the town; and they have food, goods, garments and jewels on offer. For the Buddhist to kill an animal carries a religious taboo, so there is thus great demand for the chicken, mutton and ox meat at "the Moors" (the ethnic Muslims). Fishing, however, is not considered by Buddhists as the killing of an animal. It is a very common occupation among the Buddhists living in the coastal regions. Before the crucial 1983 riots that kicked off the civil war, this town housed a considerable group of Tamils too. But as in many other villages during that time, ethnic cleansing took place and those in the minority had to flee. It is said that the grandparents of the LTTE leader Prabhakaran lived nearby, and that it was in vengeance for their brutal death at the hands of a Sinhalese mob that the appetite for war of Prabhakaran rose.

Beautiful houses and buildings with woodcarvings manifest Dutch influence on the architectural design of many houses in the village. The promontory was once a grand shipping port for Dutch ivory traders. On the beach the many fishermen of the village work and park their katamarans. There are about ten guesthouses by the beach road, but no three-star or charter travel hotels, so international tourism has a small impact on the town economy. The many local pilgrims however, on their way to the important temples in the south as the Vishnu temple in Dondra and Katarangama, enjoy stopping for a bite under the shading palms next to the beach. In 1996 there was a gorgeous coral reef in the bay, but it has almost died out due to a considerable rise in the sea temperature some years back. But because of the cultivation program funded by UNESCO, the reef was being rescued when I returned in 2001.

Along the coastline one finds about four fishing communities, or extended families, that use the beach as their workplace and for parking their katamarans. The family I rented from

belonged to one of these and many of our close neighbours were sisters, brothers or cousins of "MotherMy", or relatives of her husband. "Young Son" of my household and other boat owners in our neighbourhood, kept their boats on the part of the beach that borders the patch of land that belongs to them and their relatives. It seemed that this part of town held memories of the old land tenure system[11] in which each caste shared pieces of land in separate parts of the village or town. Some of our close neighbours were blacksmiths or from the washing caste so the area was not held by this "clan" only. Nonetheless, today most people buy land from the government. They no longer get a share of a village from the village headman or the king as payment for their services as in the pre-colonial times. There are examples though of how people with good connections to the local government obtain fine pieces of land as gifts or for a low price.[12] The general view is that public posts are highly dependent on personal relations, and that in order to stay in power one has to give special treats to one's supporters and patrons. To give special treats to someone, like a share of land, is for some politicians or public officers thus not corrupt but viewed as one's duty.

2.1.5 The Deep South

The expression; "deep south" was regularly in use when I talked about my fieldwork with people I knew in Colombo. The expression "deep south" carries conflicting connotations, and in Sri Lanka the people of the "deep south" have cultural practices that are distinct from the rest of the island. Even though never strictly acknowledged, socially the southerners form separable clans of caste groups that intermarry with each other. The "deep south" moreover is a common name for the Christian hell. And thus the expression "deep south" carries a link to the Buddhist ritual-healing practices (Tovils) of the "devil dancers" which the Aduras are popularly known as. In fact, because of the powerful rumours about the magic powers of the Aduras, I met many in Colombo who viewed people from the southern region as auspiciously as they did an unfamiliar Tamil. They just did not trust their intentions. It was not that surprising though as their work was widely known. For instance, one night I learned that the work of spirits of the categories which the Aduras deal with through their ritual work had also made national news. This particular report was about a man from the south with an obscure problem. Blood had seeped into the floor of his house,

[11] As described in its ideal form by Gananath Obeyesekere (1967)

[12] A dancer I know obtained a very good piece of land for free. It was land for his new private dancing school.

and apparently it just came up out of the ground. Some Bhikkus interviewed in the report confirmed the uncanny nature of the problem. The blood seeping up from the ground, I was later told by my informants, is a common sign of the influence of a Pretea, a ghost and ghosts dwell in the realms of the Buddhist pantheon over which the Aduras has commanding authority. There are many stories of how Aduras have been killed by powerful mantras – stories that illustrate the uncanny nature of their work. One of the rituals that they no longer perform, but could do in the past, concerns the creation of a "zombie child". The story has it that the father of one of my informants had performed the rite more times than he had the "power", or protection to do – more than 20 times – and it had eventually killed him. The principle of the rite is "simple": one gets a child mummy of a couple that are both the first born of their own families. Then one makes an offering basket with required offerings (fried food, eggs, rice) and the mummy, and puts a charm on it at a cemetery. The mummy is "breathed life into" (djivan kirima) through ritual actions, and is then asked to go to the house of the person whose life the client wants to end. The mummy brings an egg from the offering basket that was charmed with it, and when s/he arrives at his victim's place s/he asks for help. S/he then returns to the cemetery where the Adura is waiting for him/her, and when he comes back the victim is dead. When it returns, the Adura throws a fireball at the mummy and it "dies". It can however be awoken again through the same ritual procedure. The uncanny nature of and dangers connected with charms like this have given the Aduras quite a reputation. The story is very similar to themes of zombie films, and I do not know if it is the Aduras' work which has informed the storyline of the films, or the other way around. In the "real world" Zombies are people who believe that they are dead – a child mummy that has "life breathed life into it" and sent away to visit their victims, thus is of a qualitatively different nature. The reason I mention this story is to bring attention to one way in which their reputation as powerful magicians comes into being, many Aduras have died in connection with performing their rituals. In the field of popular culture the challenges and dangers faced by the Adura as a ritualist, a "Mantra man" seizing the forces of powerful supernatural forces are of minor concern as the Aduras in this context achieve fame and honour for their artistic capacities and skills as "traditional dancers".

I emphasise that in the following text I simplify the reference to any initiated performer of the curing rites by using the word 'Aduras'. An Adura can in my terms both be a drummer,

dancer or Mantrachari (ceremonial master) of ceremonies. In the up-country region, the Bereva ritualists are addressed as Yak Dessa and not Yak Adura, but again, for the sake of simplification I will simply make use of the title Adura as long as the difference between the traditions is not explicitly important for my argument. This work nonetheless basically concerns the low-country dance tradition.

2.2 Fieldwork Trip 1 (July 1996–May 1997)

2.2.1 Field Setting

In July 1996 I settled in the Matara district, in a village located by the very southern beaches of Sri Lanka. The inhabitants of this village mainly belong to the fishermen's caste and most are Buddhist, but the considerable proportion of Muslims also has a great impact on village community life.

I lived with a Sinhala speaking Buddhist family belonging to the Karava (fishermen) caste. The head of my household was a moneylender and her husband had left the household 8 years previously in order to become a Buddhist priest (bhikku). Previously this man had been an important local politician and for some years he was a devotee of a demon/god called Suniyam. Because of this he worked as a local holy gifted oracle for 13 years, but finally he lost his 'powers' due to heavy drinking, and decided that the only way he could "survive" was by joining the Buddhist sangha (order of monks). At the time of my fieldwork he was the head priest of four temples. Occasionally he visited our place in order to arrange family affairs. This household turned out to be a brilliant place to experience the variety of Sri Lankan coastal life. So far I have mentioned Buddhist religious practices and money lending affairs, but my household head, MotherMy, had seven children who represented a great spectrum of occupations. MotherMy's youngest daughter was married and lived in France, but before she left she had run a dancing school in our house, and her former students occasionally came by to borrow costumes and drums on their way to wedding performances. The second oldest daughter and her husband were working as local welfare officers and many people came to our place in order to collect their monthly social security money. The eldest daughter was about to be married; and one matchmaker, one astrologer and one

soothsayer appeared first, followed by a suitable husband and his family. And finally the second youngest daughter was newly separated from her husband and lived in our house together with her two children. MotherMy's two sons were both businessmen. The eldest was running a shop and he was a candidate for the district council during the elections in spring `97. The other son was running a tourist hotel nearby and was the director of a fishing company owned by a German couple. In this way my household was a place which contained a great spectrum of Sri Lankan occupations. Activities within Buddhism, politics, private international co-operation, tourism, local social services and traditional arts were some of these. Still this household was not my main focus of research. One could say that this was a place where I relaxed, ate, and prepared for my main research which was travelling around with the Aduras on their assignments in the Matara district and other places that their work took me to. The case of MotherMy in relation to the discussion on the Rata Yakuma of this research project was given to me at the end of my fieldwork in 2002 – after she had followed my research with great interest as she was herself highly knowledgeable on religious matters and rituals.

In order to pursue my fieldwork topic of getting to know the local healing practices, I was in need of various sorts of assistance. Firstly, my knowledge of the Sinhala language was weak and I needed someone to translate for me. Secondly I needed some kind of 'protection assistance' to show that I, as a young woman, "belonged" to someone, during my stays at ritual houses and travelling. Both these things were taken care of by my assistant, Mahattea, who fortunately was also initiated into the healing practice in question. Mahattea had learned the practice from his father who was a famous healer, and for some years he worked for the Ministry of cultural affairs as a dancer of the national ensemble. After his father died, when Mahattea was about 26 years old, he took on other responsibilities in his household and his mother insisted on him finding a 'proper job' instead. So from then on he worked as a clerk; however when I met him he was temporarily out of work. Nonetheless, he earned some money as a priest (kapurala), that is to say that he performed beneficial prayers (Set Kavis) for worshippers, at the local temple for goddess Pattini on full moon days. He also earned some money by performing small curative ceremonies for people afflicted by bad planetary, spiritual or sorcery influence. We both benefited from our working relationship, and by joining me on rituals he experienced a kind of revival among the other healers. He had not

had the chance to meet many of them for years, and through these meetings he got the chance to "advertise" his own knowledge. I hope he still benefits from this revival. The last news I heard was that he had started to join some of our common healer friends (Aduras) on small offering ceremonies such as ghost offering rituals (Preta Pidenis) after my departure.

Every fieldwork is unique as it develops through a dialogue on your informants' wants, characters and needs. Concerns about friendship, tolerance and respect while I carried out my research were not insignificant, especially since the social "codes" differed widely from those I was used to from before. To me, it was not always easy to work with an assistant. What I found most difficult were the limitations I experienced by being dependent on others' translations to get any data filed. Mahattea also knew the profession and he functioned both as my translator and my teacher. This gave him a dualistic role which I sometimes appreciated and sometimes felt was problematic. Still, I could never have got as close to the practices as I did without his assistance since his knowledge about the practices was invaluable. Mahattea's house was located close to many of my healer friends, and therefore it functioned as a free talk-zone where healers dropped by at 'no-ritual-to-be-undertaken-days', and many of my interviews were recorded here.

In order to collect my data I had to do a kind of 'exorcism tour', that is, I followed the healers I got to know to the rituals to be performed. The rituals were held at the houses of the afflicted, and the district my healer friends covered was that of Matara, but they also crossed the district borders up to Hambantota and Ratnapura during healing missions. This kind of "travelling fieldwork" limited my data in various ways. The most important bias was that I rarely met the patients before my arrival at the ritual houses, and that I only revisited these a few times afterwards. This was due to the fact that time was a limited resource in relation to the geographical area I covered. Further, in order to pursue the focus of my project I stressed the healer's knowledge as being the most important factor. This operative focus of fieldwork led to a lack of knowledge about the socio-cultural processes which penetrated the patients' lives apart from the factors engaged through the medium of the rituals themselves. To underline this point; the voices of others than the healers (Aduras) themselves, their close relatives and those I met at the ritual houses, were more or less absent throughout this fieldwork. My meetings with the Aduras were always times of

honesty and respect; but still I will never be sure how many guru mustis (teacher secrets) they really shared with me back then. For closer descriptions of who the Aduras are, their caste history etc., I refer the reader to the solid work of Bruce Kapferer (1983).

2.3 Fieldwork Trip 2 (July 2001–June 2002 and September–December 2003)

2.3.1 The Political Dimension of my Norwegian Identity

"So, the spy is back", said my Lankan friend once with a smile, seated at his favourite spot under a shed in the garden of those in-between. Considered a professional spy or not, I was then a female anthropologist in my thirties. Being a Norwegian, on my first research trip, few knew my place of origin and the assistant who worked for me throughout that period used to say that I came from NORAD, the Norwegian Directory of Development Aid Cooperation. Some of their projects, particularly their fishing industry project in Hambantota, were very well known down south and people nodded in a friendly way when hearing this. Because of the peace negotiation role taken on by Norwegian diplomats since 1998, the general knowledge about my home country when returning to Sri Lanka in 2001 had improved. But even more important in my regard was the uncertainty about my intentions created by the public opinion about the performance of the peace negotiators and the peace monitoring staff as well as fantastic conspiracy-inspired rumours about the hidden agendas of the Norwegians for becoming involving in the process. Due to these political events, my Norwegian social body and study had become politicised. Roy Wagner (1975) discussed the dialectical nature of culture shock and how the anthropologist with his "in-between" status in fieldwork becomes a professional stranger both for his own "people" and the natives. He recognises the possibility of paranoid perceptions of the anthropologist and writes that: "Those of his own society imagine he has gone native, whereas the natives often feel he is a spy or a government agent" (Ibid: 10). Wagner's words "normalise" the situation that I experienced, but I nonetheless think that my informants greatly exaggerated the importance of my position and work. However, my knowledge of and genuine interest in my field of study did comfort most people whose goodwill my work was dependent on. In order not to worry my informants, particularly those working in the civil service, I restricted my research topic to public programs and activities and not policy discourse.

2.3.2 Social and Political Context

When arriving in "paradise" in July 2001 the socio- political situation in Colombo was simply out of control. During the post-colonial area – that is to say from the year of withdrawal of British rule in 1948 – the political challenges in Sri Lanka have been many and the work of establishing a social democracy based on a British model of governance has been extremely difficult. Social and cultural hierarchical status-marks such as ethnicity, caste, village, religion, family, education and money were all made relevant in the power struggle for any public post. The public system of Sri Lanka is therefore highly intricate and manipulative, and from my point of view it seems that a social distinction between the private and public spheres is not workable in this cultural context. The ruling President Kumaratunge more than once acted like a queen with unlimited authority from her people, as an oligarch, and made many highly affective political statements and decisions. However, the case of Sri Lanka is not unique. Sri Lanka is just one of many "developing" countries struggling to transform their pre-colonial and colonial social-organisation into a "Western" democratic state regime and to adjust to the global capital marked economic system to cope with the global nation-state-building project that took place throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century. In Sri Lanka the Tamil speaking minority were discriminated against in the post colonial years by the Buddhist Sinhalese majority, mainly through the fact that their access to public services and the "public sphere" in general became restricted and the Tamil struggle for public recognition escalated from the 1983 riots onwards into civil war. The Tamil oppressors formed a guerrilla group, LTTE, and after twenty-four years of war, the government army, which was fifteen times larger, had not been able to conquer them.

Two days after my arrival on the island in July 2001, LTTE – The Tamil Liberation Front for Tamil Eelam, better know as the Tamil Tigers – attacked the Bandaranaike International Airport located in the outskirts of the capital, Colombo. In the attack, 20 people were killed out of which 13 were identified as Tamil Tigers, 5 as Sri Lankan army soldiers and 2 as guards. Moreover 8 military planes and 6 civilian aircraft belonging to the "Sri Lankan Air Force" were damaged or destroyed. The attack must be said to be the most decisive in the then 19 year history of civil war. The LTTE cadres had just walked into the most secure

government army zone fully armed and dressed to kill and to die in their suicide bomber outfits. The army had been completely outmanoeuvred and put the country into a state of emergency. The government was afraid of civil riots since this used to be a common response by the civil Sinhalese to successful operations carried out by the LTTE. Consequently, as soon as the airport reopened, within the diplomatic limit of 48 hours, the tourists fled the country. The attack thus caused a major setback for the tourist industry, and with the "September 11" terrorist attack in New York coming up even harder times were to follow. The attack on the airport had put "deadlock" on the government and the government army.

The Sri Lankan army and security forces had been taken by surprise and members of parliament held their military leader – Madam – President Chandrika Kumaratunge responsible. The President responded to the serious critique by suspending parliament and firing several ministers. The government of Sri Lanka found itself in a major crisis, and as a friend said, the war was over, the LTTE had won their case. As the political situation developed throughout the following months of fieldwork, my friend was seemingly proved right in his presumptions. In order to regain the trust of the people, the President announced a government election to be held a few months ahead. The President and government had been forced to change to a conflict solution strategy. The military effort had been in vain, so the government party (SLFP) asked the voters to vote for a renewal of the peace negotiation mandate. In general, Sri Lankans are very interested in politics – 76% voted at the 2001 election. The voters turned out to mistrust the sitting government and the SLFP lost their leading position. People were dissatisfied by the way the government had handled the conflict, but public opinion also supported the not yet proved claims that leading politicians had been acting unscrupulously. The United National Party (UNP) took over with a mandate to solve the many economic problems as well as to bring an end to the ethnic conflict. However, the President held her post because in Sri Lanka the president is elected separately and holds executive presidency. The UNP, headed by Prime Minister Wichremasinghe, formed the new parliament that opened on the 5th of December 2001. The challenges for the new government were many. The former government had increased their foreign debt to a high level and in reality there was no money to continue the war. The government's reliance on foreign funding was so severe that the new parliament suggested that they should not re-

open before the new year of 2002, because then the new budgets of foreign donors would be available. Also, the re-allocation of many ministries showed the dependency on development aid as it mirrored the multilateral development plans of the supporting nations.

With the new government and Prime Minister Wichremasinghe in charge, the conflict took a new turn. The sudden post 11th of September effect that created a new international focus on terrorism drove this process in an important way. In Sri Lanka, a major peace movement began. In 2002, a ceasefire agreement was signed between the newly elected UNP Government and the LTTE. From then on there were peace talks, peace negotiations, peace monitoring, peace solutions, peace moves, peace meetings, peace marches, peace pilgrimages, peace concerts, a peace train and many other peaceful projects taking place countrywide. The Norwegian-brokered ceasefire agreement between the LTTE and the government had raised hopes for an end to the civil war. As a friend commented in an ironic way, the Sri Lankans were now as fanatical about making peace as they had been about making war just months before. The peace process proceeded, but not, however without opposition criticism. I left the country in May 2002 and when returning in October 2003 the political climate was again one of radical change. As things had developed in the time I had been away, the President Kumaratunge had on the Sinhalese side challenged the peace process. The bitter power struggle between the President and the Prime Minister had taken the form of a public drama. The Norwegian peace convoy on their side had underestimated the power of the President, and put all their trust in the Prime Minister and his supporters. To me it seemed that the peace process was hampered in significant ways by the President's lack of willingness to co-operate (and later the ignorance of the Prime Minister) and her powerful mandate to dissolve the parliament and to dismiss members of the cabinet whenever she thought it was required (for the safety of the country) – a mandate which she made use of. The UNP represented a more progressive liberal economical model than their forerunners; peace, they argued, depended on economic growth, and for the first time in post-colonial history it was for instance possible for foreigners to buy land. Big investments were hence made by international co-operatives, first and foremost by progressive Chinese and Japanese companies. It is interesting that the Chinese state is also funding the new "national arts complex" that is under construction in central Colombo. Consequently the capital power of the already rich rose – and so did the cost of living for the poor. The public critique against

the economic politics of the UNP, resistance from the Sinhala Buddhist hardliners against any form of political autonomy of the Tamils in the north, and lack of results in the peace process increased, and again new elections were called for by the end of 2003. A trend during my period of fieldwork in general, was that the Asian regional collaboration in the field of military defence, business, tourist and cultural relations entered a more active phase. The peace-envoy on their side, sought their allies from other "Western donor countries" and this I suppose was also an unfortunate move as Sri Lanka in this period, as I learned through my investigations into the activities of the public cultural agreements, strengthened ties with other SSARCH countries, in particular with India and Pakistan.

The radical change that the peace process created socially can be illustrated by an example from a common household and a public place. In the years before the peace move began, the rarity of social activities, the calm created by everyday routines at my house, such as waking up and turning on the television for Buddhist pirit, sweeping the house and the garden, sending the children to school, going to the market for vegetables, spending hours cleaning and cutting leaves and vegetables for lunch, attending to the garden, taking a bath and washing clothes, relaxing, picking up the children, eating, lighting the oil lamp and offering tea, water, incense and flowers to Buddha at the family altar, and sitting down on the mat all together and reciting some Buddhist prayers before spending the late evening entertained by local tele-dramas, getting into bed by ten, up at five to repeat the routines of every yesterday – all this was caused by the common fear of going out. One was particularly advised not to go out after night fell at about 6.30 PM. In Colombo it was more common though to go out for a late dinner. However, the routine was broken when the ceasefire was implemented in February 2002, and thousands of people again dared to flock together outdoors – also at night. The image that impressed me most in this period of genuine social movement towards peace, was the sight of Galle Face green packed with locals enjoying their evening-meals. This green lane by the seashore in the centre of Colombo, close to the house of the Prime-Minister and President and the army headquarters had been deserted due to terror-threats from my first visit in 1996 – and perhaps much longer before. Galle Face was now transformed into a place for social pleasure, "sun worship" and fun.
Fieldwork in Sri Lanka during the autumn of 2001 was not only an experience of local life during a state of emergency, a political election rally, and the social and economic impact of

the desertion of Sri Lanka by tourists which the 11th of September aftermath created, but (more crucially for the locals) an experience of what happens when two monsoons and crops fail. Extensive power cuts were employed for months at midday, evenings and nights[13]. The rich could afford power generators, but my informants in the south where I worked were not rich. However, corrupt officers in the public electricity board and not Nature were held publicly responsible for the lack of power supply, while the politicians accused one another of having spent the money while Red Cross International hosted food stations around the country. Trucks loaded with water from the highlands helped people living elsewhere. Many of the local religious rituals deal with the human vulnerability of famine. Offerings of food and other symbols of fertility are made during such ceremonies – the principle of such rites is that sympathetic magic logic such as the offering of crops makes crops grow. Physically, famine makes the human body infertile, causes hallucinations, and brings about psychosomatic disorders. In this period I therefore also heard about many instances where people were frightened and had sent for ritual healers (Aduras) that could relieve them from unfortunate spiritual influence, as they had fainted, hallucinated, experienced uncontrollable shivering etc., all symptoms of dehydration and hunger. In other words, it was socially a troublesome period for many.

In regard to the ritual repertoire, the economic hard times made the frequency of the minor rituals for luck and curing extremely popular as they are relatively cheap. Some places cancelled planned village prosperity rites but in other places they were organised in a hurry in an attempt to reverse the misfortune of the times. The Tovil rites are a costly affair and the situation moreover put the Aduras out of the grand Tovil work business. Moreover, due to the political and economic situation the annual state festivals organised by the boards of the Arts council of the season had been cancelled, and I therefore had to go back to Sri Lanka in 2003 in order to get such events on record. However, the Aduras whom I worked with were popular entertainers at the many political rally meetings taking place during the autumn of 2001, and these assignments compensated for some of the reduced income experienced due the decline in Tovil work. One of my Adura informants nonetheless experienced the situation as so problematic that he got a grand Bali Tovil rite performed for himself at his

[13] The last time the monsoon had failed was in 1996, and before that in 1992.

house. This is a ritual of the "Tovil system" that deals with planetary misfortunes. In other words, the economic and political situation coloured my own fieldwork and determined what sort of performances I was able to research throughout this period.

2.3.3 Violence and Other Expressions of Social Deprivation

The following "omen" that I wrote about in my fieldwork notes in Sri Lanka is given hereunder as a subjective introduction to the violent context of my fieldwork in Sri Lanka during my research period. Violence coloured the daily life of everyone in Sri Lanka in one way or another and mine was no exception:

AN OMEN

In the morning hours after a ritual night watch, I was strolling along the street with my eyes fixed on my feet as if my brain had to command my feet to take each step forward. Ritual research is an exhausting business sometimes. On my way I noticed a black yellow spotted butterfly crawling on the roadside. I felt pity for it as it looked dizzy and weak. Well, I did not pay much attention to it then. As people in this land of Buddhism had taught me that life is about suffering first and foremost. In order to transcend the world of sufferers we must get rid ourselves of our habits of worldly emotional attachment – the karmic unwholesome feelings of greed, hate and delusion. And as I could see by this, life as a butterfly was no exception even though I wished it were different. Wishing that life as a butterfly would be a sabbatical, a short luxury vacation of air-surfing and feasting – dining on delicious flower nectar- as if that was all the body of the transformed and the transforming needs. And when pleased, fall into sleep on a soft flower petal bedding. So, I just kept on walking, still observing my feet so as not to stumble when another black yellow spotted butterfly appeared and hindered me on the path. This one was just standing on the pathway, looking as if already dead. I bowed down and took the poor creature out of the road – yes, it was still alive – hoping that my small act of rescue would help it survive. However, as the third black yellow creature showed up, it just took to its wings and fled. From this I reasoned Lankan-wise that there was trouble ahead, but that although it would be devastating, I was safe for now.

Deep South, October 2001.

Reading the text from my fieldwork notes above some years later I came to remember what happened in the time between when I spotted the second and third butterfly. It surely had

inspired my creepy mood, but was left out of my anecdote. What happened was that on that morning I had been walking from the neighbouring village to a friends to pick up my bike, which had I left at their home so it should not be stolen, and I had unwarily encountered a crime scene connected with an ongoing conflict between two factions of the local mafia. When I got there, the entrance to my friend's house was shut as expected, but had been carelessly left unlocked so I had pushed open the gate. Inside, I was greeted by the shocking sight of the corpses of two young men shot dead the night before. They had been attacked with a "grenade gun" and their ravaged, bloody bodies had been left in their mortal position – halfway inside and outside a three-wheeler. In company with the two, a few men working at my friend's estate stood by watching over them. It had been about fourteen hours since the murder but the police had still not arrived. The murder, I was told, was the revenge of a brother whose younger sister had been raped by one of the members of the "mafia family" of the neighbouring fishing village, a rape that had happened in revenge for some other unsettled business between the families. The driver of the three-wheeler was an innocent victim of the attack, while the other man had been identified as the rapist. An eye for an eye a tooth for a tooth; a rape for money, a life for rape. This was the lesson I learned that day about fishing village mafia laws of the "deep-south".

Encounters similar to this one are plentiful in the memory of the Sri Lankans. With the civil war as a legitimising force, the killings of enemies or offenders were common news. The SLFP government led by President Kumaratunga discussed in fact sometime in the year of 2001 whether they had to reinstate the death penalty in order to reduce the murder statistics. In the daily news, the war and local politics received the most coverage. But other frequently debated social issues that caught my attention were the problem of the relatively high suicide rate among youths, the disappearance of both men and women, ragging at the campuses, strikes among students and closed universities, the situation affecting all the migrant contract workers in the Middle East, harassment of women in public, lack of work options among the educated, poverty, sexual abuse of children – by men and women, Western paedophiles, and accusations of low moral standards among Buddhist priests. In other words, the pool of situations of social despair was deep. The Buddhist goal of gaining mental control over bodily desires and the religious predisposition towards that life was suffering first and foremost, probably leading to the social acceptance of the highly emotionally charged

outbursts which Lankans are able to display and which energise the social game being played. For certain, it is easier to kill and die with the perspective that one has to be reborn thousands of times before one can be reborn in the highest state (nirvana) and escape the cycle of rebirth (samsara). Moreover, the southern social context in which I worked invited a study on male youth culture. There turned out to be territorial areas that were held under the jurisdiction of the different "gangs" who "protected" their co-villagers in different "challenging" situations. There was a common interest in martial arts, as evidenced by the many training centres for "fighting techniques", and the popularity and wide distribution of highly violent "karate", "boxing", "mafia" and "martial arts" films produced in Asia. There are unfortunately yet no studies available on this feature of Sri Lankan youth culture, but it is certainly of great importance and directly linked to the use of violence in the wider context.

In general, Sri Lankans are competitive and many use all means possible to realise their desires and to protect their positions and properties. As a result, the cases of successful eliminations of social enemies are many, and it is difficult for ordinary inhabitants to feel safe. Expressions of unease, social insecurity, paranoia and stress are common and are found daily in social situations. The fear and suspicion with which many Lankans very understandably meet "the other" spun into a complex web of threats from personal, social, political, and professional enemies and self destructive suicide bombers. Common ways to take revenge include for example destroying the property of one's enemy, calling upon the wrath of spirits or gods, poisoning the food of one's enemy or casting a magic spell. In other words people involved in the work of religious institutions are central agents in social affairs. In an article Obeyesekere (1993) shows how sorcery practices provide a means through which private conflicts can be solved violently in a "clean way". Obeyesekere discovered that the number of cases filed with the police during the year of study was totally outnumbered by the "violent acts of intention" "carried out" at the sorcery temples. Sorcery practice is a way to "solve" personal conflicts without face to face confrontations. Many of the small rituals carried out on a daily basis as well as on more important occasions such as the many "rites of passage", are rites that are put together in order to protect the individual against the social/personal power of sorcery, "witchcraft", and planetary and supernatural interference. The rituals for protection counteract the possible effects of "the other".

2.3.4 The Consequences of Violence in Regard to my own Fieldwork and Research Project

Violence will not be addressed directly in this work, but as the above makes clear, during my research the people of Sri Lanka were troubled with civil war, and ethnic, social, and domestic violence. The rasa aesthetics (Bharatamuni) tells us that the expression of sorrow is anger and the social spiral of violence – the chain of death – sorrow – anger –death – sorrow. Ranciere's model, as mentioned in the introduction, takes as an ontological position that communities are constituted by a shared mode of existence. Thinking along the lines of this model, in a community whose aesthetic mode becomes dominated by sorrow and anger, the politics of the community become violent.

Despite the urgent social backdrop of my research, I had come to Sri Lanka in order to conduct a study of local cultural practice/dance, and its institutions. Even though many unforeseen situations came up on the way and kept putting me off track, I stuck with my initial plan of doing so. The public violence nonetheless limited my own movements as I had to be cautious, and in some ways it also affected the questions that I was able to address in the field. For instance, I decided very early, that due to the rules I made in regard to the personal risks I was willing to take for this project, that I would stay away from events where too many important politicians had gathered as they were common bomb targets at this time. I have therefore, for instance, not looked into the important work carried out in the field of culture by the Presidential Fund, nor have I looked into the activities or events at the "really important" state ceremonial hall, the BMCH (Bandaranike Memorial Congress Hall).

I found my fieldwork personally challenging in many respects. During my first year of fieldwork I developed an emotional distance from the many social issues that people whom I met were troubled by and learned to take a kind of distanced "polite curiosity view" into situations encountered. I suppose that my fieldwork scope in many ways was extreme though. The "Tovil system" does after all engage with the lifeworld of demons and other antisocial illness-causing agents and what we have learned to view as their social cause. My situation was not bad however compared to an anthropologist that I know who lived in the refugee camp in Vavunia, a place where one heard the sound of and saw the light from shelling and bomb attacks, and where the daily news concerned killings and escapes. The

“demons” of my informants could after all be “commanded back” to the subordinate realms by the help of the “Tovil system”, but the people fighting and living in the northern and north-eastern regions did not have such an aesthetic religious technology available to solve their problems.

For this PhD project I aimed to contribute to Handelman’s (1990 (1998)) quest for Anthropology in regard to the study of public events, and in order to meet the needs of case material, as in my first research period, I carried out “travelling fieldwork”. From others who did more traditional fieldwork and lived with a local community for longer periods, studying community life and discourses, I learned that they had been given a very hard time. Some had been threatened or harassed somehow, as I had been. Some were subjected to physical violence and others got caught in social web of lies. Some I know in fact fled Sri Lanka, fearing for their lives. A common experience shared by all that I spoke with was the uneasy feeling of never being really safe. In his thesis on the political discourse on the ethnic conflict among an elite community in Colombo Morten Olesen (2009) writes a little about the problems of this sort that he himself experienced. Together we got to terms with why men would just walk straight into us in the street when walking with friends or alone, and concluded that it had to be motivated by an urge for domination. My own most problematic experience in this regard was the continual sexual harassment situations, which in the beginning I was just too shocked to respond to. Then after a while I responded and showed my anger to the offenders. When my first fieldwork ended I was marked by the experiences, but I did not really bother about them as I was safe back home. The problem had to be dealt with however when I decided to go back to Sri Lanka for a second period of fieldwork. This time I did it with the awareness that the harassment situation would be a part of my life again for one full year. As I was so aware of it, it felt like I had been asking to be harassed of my own free will, and could therefore not distance myself from it in the same way as I had done throughout the first year. I tried to pretend that it was just a part of the context and played ignorant when it happened instead of making as much fuss as I had done during my first fieldwork trip. As things developed, some things could not be ignored after all and I got some men arrested for their intimidating behaviour. Due to the Lankan way of responding to the embarrassment of having a complaint filed against one for immoral actions – by taking revenge – I completed only half of my fieldwork of 2001 – 2002 before deciding to

change my residency in the south. The same men that I filed a complaint about were arrested yet again during my stay. This time it had been ten of them gang raping two local women – an offence that was much more severe than the one I had reported them for some months earlier. I myself had after all not been physically harmed in any way.

The limitations that the harassment situation put on my fieldwork in general, were not of great importance though because the problems mainly occurred when I took public transport or chose to walk on foot, or stayed at the house of MotherMy for too long, and these were activities that I could just stop doing. On the bus to the south from Colombo, the stretch for which I was still dependent on public transport, I just bought two seats on the intercity bus; one for me and one for my bag. To all other places I went by private transportation. I stopped staying at MotherMy's place when in the south, but that was OK as the house was not really important for my research this time.

Travelling fieldwork did in other words, give me a kind of freedom and detachment from the "social games" of the locals that I personally and professionally benefited from. It enabled me to come across as less threatening to people whom I met in general and I found that people talked more freely to me when I was a total stranger to them on a short visit in their village than to the woman they had seen in their neighbourhood for weeks and who they needed to "control" and be "protective against". By taking a kind of professional acquaintance role in relation to the Aduras, even though our work in reality was very different, it became much easier for them to relate to me over time. A common technique that I used in order to get information about my informants, as they were rather protective of revealing sensitive and personal information about themselves, was to ask our common acquaintances about things that interested me in regard to them. If any of the information that I got was important for the project, I checked the facts with the persons concerned. The information was not really sensitive as it was publicly known in the network, but concerned things that they themselves perhaps did not even consider important for me to know. I believe that things would have been very different if any of them had been given a special position as a key informant. This was because my thesis required views from many, not just a superior few. I stress however that there is one informant that I am most indebted to, that is S.L.H Thillekeratna from Kapuhena, whom I worked closely with both during my first and

second periods of fieldwork. S.L. Arniss from Akuressa is another that I will single out because his knowledge of the textual tradition of the "Tovil system" was invaluable for this thesis.

2.3.5 Research, Field Observations, Interviews and Secondary Sources.

A great part of my second fieldwork trip in Sri Lanka was spent travelling between villages in the southern, western and central provinces in order to watch cultural performances, to visit important institutions or to meet important informants. However, my fieldwork trip was hardcore in comparison with the second fieldwork trip as I had a period of 7 months non-stop research, focusing on the topic of rituals, and managed to record more than 80 different night and sometimes day and night long cultural performances. Due to the drought and the economic crisis in 2001 there were few grand Tovil rituals. The small ones increased in numbers but were outside the scope of my work.

The Aduras are, as mentioned above, first and foremost ceremonial leaders, drummers and dancers, and the "Tovil dance" forms are today used in many cultural events and public/religious ceremonies apart from the Tovil rituals. In fieldwork the Aduras themselves proved highly innovative in regard to the contexts in which they perform their ritual repertoire. Of importance for this work were therefore the dual status of the ritualists as ritual healers (which they are in the "Tovil system"), and as representatives of "traditional arts" in many public assignments. During my research in 1996 –1997 I basically worked with Aduras living in and around Matara, and my key informants lived in Dondra. I thus visited many house rituals in fishing villages along the stretch between Matara and Hambantota. The rituals I documented for this work, led me away from the coast – to the in-country – to the many farming villages of the Matara region and into the Uva and Saburugamuva districts. Moreover, in Colombo I met Aduras from the Kandy and Bentara regions. These were Aduras working both as lecturers at the university, and as performers in the national dance troupe.

Ideally there should be a community of practising Aduras in each village (in the Matara district), but in reality this is rarely the case. Today there are many Aduras who depend on assistance from afar in order to pull off a grand ceremony in their own villages. This fact

does not cause any real problems as the Bereva clan of the Matara district intermarry, and they take a common responsibility for their caste's profession. They therefore assist each other when needed. In the field I met Aduras from other castes than the Bereva. The great majority of ritualists in the system are nonetheless, I emphasise, from the Bereva community. The others that I met were from the Oli, Durava, Salagama or Karava communities[14]. The Oli caste, according to the rajakariya system, which is the local caste system (Obeyesekere 1967, Raby 1985, Roberts 1982, Yalman 1960, Beteille 1996, Gunasekera 1994) are providers of ritual services for people of the Karava caste.[15] The Bereva ideally service the Goigama. Among the Aduras that I worked with for this research project during 2001 – 2003, all but one student belonged to the Bereva caste. Moreover, in my second fieldwork I restricted the number of Adura informants to a handful – those best skilled on the subject of the Rata Yakuma ritual that I was documenting and most active as "traditional dancers". Also, during this time in-between the rites, I spent the afternoons at the Aduras' houses interviewing them individually on different subjects that were in need of clarification. I also managed to arrange some focus group interviews at the end of my fieldwork with some of my Adura informants.

My work with the civil servants in the south focused on their involvement in various cultural programs and activities. Methodologically the work I carried out in the civil bodies became guided by the findings of Nabika Raby (1985) on the local bureaucracy, its power structures, and accessibility. In particular her analysis of the role of the civic officer as a private and public person and his/her lines of loyalty and authority was instructive. An important activity that I documented was the public dance competitions, which took place at the district, provincial and national levels. The winners of these competitions got the chance to participate in the public traditional art festivals in their districts or in Colombo. For a television transmitted traditional arts show organised by a local NGO, members of the Arts Council visited dance schools in the "safe" districts, and personally auditioned the dancers selected for the show. The judges of the district competitions whom I met in the south were

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[14] Michael Roberts (1982) has done research on the history of these castes in the southern region and argues that the majority of these families came as migrants from India in the middle of the last century but adopted Buddhism and Sinhala and are thus viewed as ethnic Sinhalese.

[15] Thanks to Lionel Bentage for enlightening me on the subject.

"retired" dancers working in the civil service as teachers or officers. However, the competitions were organised by civil officers from different councils under the guidance of the Ministry of Culture and the Department of Culture. The competitions between the many dance schools and the annual festivals became my key source for the information that I required on how the cultural policy at the national level was implemented in the civil society at the district level.

Originally, it had been my plan to start working in Colombo in order to create a map of policy trends and important implementing bodies in the field of cultural policy. With this baseline study as a guide I had then planned to start travelling down south for periods and interview officers working at the provincial and district levels and document some of their activities. I had also planned to document a ritual – the Rata Yakuma, a rite that during my first fieldwork was very rarely performed and lacked proper documentation. Moreover, this ritual was chosen due to the popularity of the performance of the dance/drama section at Traditional Art Shows and was thus a brilliant case to discuss in relation to the continuity between the rituals and new cultural performances. Due to many misunderstandings – or perhaps more correctly a case of misunderstood authority – two months after my fieldwork started I found myself in a very ineffective position. It was not before January 2002 that I managed to get into the ideal field position, one that gave me access to the fields of discourse that my original project had been directed towards. I then rented a flat in Colombo and started the work on the state institutions. I also continued to travel down south and continued to visit my informants from the civil service and kept on travelling with the Aduras on important cultural performances. However, Rata Yakuma rites continued to be very rarely performed throughout my fieldwork period, but I finally managed to get a handful on record.

2.3.6 The Sinhala Language Issue and my Visual Field Observation Material

Much of the information that I base my analysis on was gained by my many observations of cultural and ritual activities in the field. My visual observations of "Tovil dance" in its many contexts of employment became a crucial source of information. My knowledge of Sinhala was better during my second fieldwork, but was still limited to basic vocabulary and my knowledge of the specialised terminology of the "Tovil system". Only with a translator at my

side could I engage in conversations and carry out structured interviews. I also recorded many public speeches at different events, which I had translated afterwards. These recordings became crucial data as they gave me valuable information about how the performers and their patrons perceived and promoted their work in terms of the religious, cultural, social and aesthetic dimensions of these performances. Despite the resistance from the anthropological discipline to accept visual/autodactically perceived cases as valid evidence since they are full of subjective presumptions (Clifford 1997) – I have chosen, due to the contextual and thematic relevance, to include a few of my very basic cases which I never found the time or opportunity to investigate further in this thesis.

2.3.7 In Search of an Assistant

The main challenge during my fieldwork for this research project came from an unexpected direction. I knew it might be hard getting the proper information from my informants, since the Aduras particularly are very concerned about the value of their knowledge and restrictive about whom they share it with. However I did not consider that it would be too difficult finding someone to travel with me and do translations for me. As mentioned earlier, the political dimension of my social body and the possible consequences of my work had an impact on my fieldwork. The case study created on the basis on my search for an assistant below reveals other dimensions of social considerations. First and foremost it illuminates many of the limitations arising due to the fact that I was a female researcher naively believing that I could hire a female assistant. Moreover it shows how the question of expectations, economic obligations, moral conduct, demeanour and trust are mutually negotiated throughout a period of fieldwork. As one of the cases shows, racism against "Whities" like me also exists in Sri Lanka. The hierarchical nature of the social status system in Sri Lanka works in such a way that the high social status of my affiliations could benefit my own work greatly. I conclude however that what eventually makes fieldwork successful or not is determined by the resources of your network of competent and reliable affiliations, informants and assistants.

When I was in Sri Lanka during the period of 96-97 I knew that it was important to have a travelling companion for my own safety. My reading of Berreman's article: "Behind many masks" (1962) based on his fieldwork experiences from a Himalayan village had informed

me that this person should be of appropriate social status in terms of class, gender and caste vice. Berreman had used many different assistants in fieldwork and had consequently experienced how their status affected his own in the field – as well as what sort of arenas and information he himself got access to in their presence. I also followed his advice on how to work with the power hierarchy of the network of study.

Moreover, I was concerned that the ideal assistant should have a great knowledge of English and Sinhala as well as some interest in the topics of study. With the prospect of spending long nights in various villages, I looked for a person having a certain personal interest in the project. Luckily I found one and the relationship lasted throughout my entire fieldwork trip. For various reasons the working relationship with Assistant-X could not continue when I returned in 2001. One of the reasons for this was the economic situation of my assistant. I know that in Sri Lanka a relationship between the employee and employed includes other obligations for the employed and his/her family. The situation was just that I felt very annoyed by Assistant-X throughout the months he worked with me as he made constant records of how much money I spent, and this was exacerbated by the personal trait he had of making me feel guilty about it. As the situation developed, he became my guilty conscience. I did not have the resources needed to raise his life up to the standard he craved. I also knew that he was well off when looking at what others earned by doing comparative work. The reasoning for him was simple: a foreign student that could afford to come all the way down to Sri Lanka to do this research had to have full pockets. Returning to Sri Lanka I again met Assistant-X with the idea that we might work together for the sake of our old friendship. But on first meeting him at a ritual – he asked me before leaving: "After such a long time – should you not give me some money?" When we met up next time it was to discuss his prospective working conditions. Assistant-X knew his price and asked for more than double what a professor doing some translations for me charged. I therefore had to say that I could not afford his assistance any more. I thought that was it, but some days later he turned up again, this time realising that what he had asked for was too much, so we agreed upon doing some work together after all. On the agreed day, Assistant-X appeared in the morning, two hours early, directly from a small "lime-cutting" (spell-break) job in the capital. We worked for about an hour discussing some texts that he had brought with him about a ritual I was interested in, and after going through these he said that he was tired, and

therefore wanted to go home. I paid him for his work and doubled it as a gesture of friendship, but his expression when receiving the fee showed that he had hoped for more. After discussing the issue with a friend, I realised that he truly felt that I owed him money for his former duties. But as the situation became clear, it turned out that he owed some people money and that he had seen my return as a way of rescuing himself from the situation. He simply did not have the time to do the job, but just calculated that whatever job he did for me, or for others, it had to be worth a special amount of money. Again he put me in charge of his destiny, a role I refused to take.

I later found out that the information he gave me about the ritual I was investigating was not from old manuscripts written by his father as he claimed but from some books published in Sinhala by a local author. Assistant-X was not the only one that tried to share with me "valuable" published material since another Adura friend did me the same "favour" by presenting a summary of a book on Bali rituals, rituals summoning the planet gods, that I happened to have with me already. Another reason that I had to change track was the close relation Assistant-X had to an Adura who was a serious alcoholic and well known for his skills in kodivina and sorcery, and whose family history had now become known to me. This particular Adura's son was now in prison for murder – he had stabbed a neighbour who had made a move against his wife but had gone free as no one dared testify against him because of his father's skills in sorcery. Moreover, another son and his daughter had got "legally" married using fake names and had children together. In Sri Lankan terms this family were filthy, or "pau", Buddhist miscreants. I hasten to say however that the story of this particular Adura was an extreme case. My problem was just the fact that Assistant-X was introduced to me by him, and that his network of Aduras were my core informants when doing my Major fieldwork. If I had decided to continue to work with Assistant-X it would have meant that I would also have had to continue to give this particular Adura an important role in my work. As things were there were too many difficulties involved and I could not justify my informant's behaviour. I therefore decided that I would no longer work with the group of Aduras who lived near Assistant-X. Proceeding without Assistant-X at my side was a risk since the situation had to be explained, but I did not have to worry as Assistant-X was helpful in confirming my story by his own actions.

Many of my field methodological issues thus were of a moral nature and a question of demeanour and social conduct. It was important to me that I did not get into work relationships based on obligations that I eventually could not meet. It was also important that my field-material was given to me because my informants had an interest in my work so that I could trust the reliability of the information collected. The reason why the ritualists for their part agreed to work with me was, I assume, that in addition to the fact that they traditionally have students and enjoy teaching them, they also knew that publicity and documentation of the rites is helpful as a marketing tool for their profession. In this regard I also benefited from the work of students and scholars that had collaborated with Aduras earlier.

One of the persons I sought advice from on the assistant situation was an English teacher conducting private classes. He was thus a promising contact and for a long time I trusted that he would find me an assistant. In return for such a favour the teacher wanted me to arrange an invitation to a seminar on children's theatre in Norway. I could at that point not promise anything, but said that I would try. When we discussed the conditions, he found it strange that I did not want the assistant to live with me. What did I want the assistant to do if not help me out at home? Work, I answered – to do translations and assist me in collecting information in the field. I would pay a high fee, cover all expenses directly related with the work and would offer a job with clearly defined working hours. All the conditions I said, would be stated in a joint contract. At this stage of fieldwork I thought that I could deal with the assistant issue in a formal and professional way, and did not see that by having this kind of professional image I was actually scaring people off.

So as indicated, the teacher did not come up with an assistant. Next time we met he asked me for a loan of £450, which for him was three months' salary. He just needed money in order to pay his debts. Borrowing money in order to pay back money already spent is a bad deal for anyone, so I said that I would think about it, but how could I? All of my friends were in need of money for various reasons, and I could not afford to meet their expectations even if I wanted to.

Eventually my hosts introduced me to a professor in English at the Ruhunu University, but due to strikes amongst students against the new syllabus he was at present unable to reach any of them. He nonetheless offered to help me out with translations back at his home, but emphasised that he did not have the time to travel with me. After getting to know the professor a little better, I realised that he did not want to work with me in public because of the different status we each held. I was still a student, he was a professor – and I suppose he felt that it was inappropriate for him to travel with me outside the town as my host family's close relation to his was not known outside our town. The professor was very helpful in many ways, and did a very good job for me translating myths (songs) from the rituals. But, no matter how hard I pushed him, he could not think of anyone that could work with me. Meeting him I started to get a clue about how unorthodox my work really was.

One of the reasons for my unsuccessful search for an assistant was that Sri Lankans do not like to travel to places where they do not have affiliations, and the civil security situation during my research period in the autumn of 2001 was very unsafe. Some part of the unattractiveness of working with me moreover concerned the taboos related to the practice of my informants. The uneasiness connected with a white female person doing a job like mine was also at play. Still, I could not give up the hunt that easily, and after some months some Colombo friends managed to put me in touch with a young woman from the south who was fluent in English and interested in the job.

2.3.8 A Female Assistant. The Gender Challenge.

Finally, I could start my work in a proper way and I took my new assistant around meeting my informants at home as well as on rituals, visiting different cultural institutions and governmental bodies. My assistant was young, but very mature and responsible as a result of having looked after her sick mother who, as she explained, had 55% reduction in her physical capabilities since having a severe heart attack some years back. My assistant was also a girl with the courage to break the conventional career path of women. Hotel administration was her choice of career and she was one of three girls at her school. We agreed to work together on probation for one month so that both of us could freely evaluate the work situation after this period. After some time the situation appeared not to be as

bright as it seemed at first – her mother turned out to not approve of her daughter's work. On the second day of our work period, my assistant did not turn up and when I called her at home she said that her mother had asked her to quit the job. Later that evening I managed to get her mother on the line, and I got the impression that she was concerned about her daughter's reputation. Being an unmarried girl, seen by the neighbours going here and there, might harm her choice of marriage candidates. To travel here and there was not considered to be appropriate behaviour for a pretty young unmarried girl from the local middle class. Her mother was just being responsible, negative speech can, according to the idea of kodivina – witchcraft, be "mortal" at this place. So, we agreed that we should not use public transport any more. The month passed, my work was definitely progressing, and it was time to formalise our working relationship with a contract.

Unfortunately, at the same time my assistant fell sick after attending a village ritual. As a consequence she became unsure about whether she was fit for the job or not. Sri Lankan girls in general live a very routine life, rarely spending sleepless nights. I tried to explain that I also had got sick after first experiencing being awake all night, but that the body easily adapted to the situation. At that particular ritual, I had advised her to take a rest while the ritual went on, but then again, for a girl to fall asleep in public while others are looking on is not suitable behaviour – but more important, she felt too shy to do so. I was aware of that situation since my former assistant got a chest infection because he did not want to sleep on the floor of the house of people of a lower caste than his, so I suggested that we should just wrap her up so that no one could see who was in hiding. The rodiya (washerman) seated beside us had lots of clean white sheets ready, but she bravely insisted on keeping herself awake. There was no other option than sleeping on the spot at the ritual space itself however, since we were at a temple situated in the middle of a grand paddy field, far away from any house of the standard suitable for this girl. And as usual, our friends that undertook the ritual work were strangers in the village as well. When the day for signing the contract came, I went to her home to get a chance to talk with her mother. Eventually, when I brought up the issue, my assistant asked me kindly if we could continue without a contract. She assured me that she really enjoyed working with me and that she found the job very interesting. She just did not know if she could cope with staying awake at any more rituals. So from her perspective, everything was OK. However, I insisted on having that contract

signed anyway since I had to know that I could depend on her assistance, and because it was crucial to have her agreement to handle information gained through work with confidentiality. I had to know that my informants would be protected from any misuse of knowledge about their work or personal matters.

By insisting I finally got my reward. I had managed to provoke a moment of honesty from her mother and thus learned a lesson I will always be thankful for. The mother's view of the situation was definitely different from that of her daughter. As she said: the only reason for letting her work with me was that it was requested by her daughter's teacher – a person to whom she could not say no. He had taken the responsibility for this job and assured her that her daughter would be perfectly safe. There was absolutely no need to sign an agreement on confidence – her daughter would not talk to anyone about her knowledge of "these people" to anyone anyway – making reference to the low caste status of the Aduras (bereva-drummers) in the local social hierarchy. Moreover, she worried since she had heard stories about girls being placed under love spells during rituals and going off with strangers when the ritual was over, never to return. Was there not a risk of her daughter being a victim of such magic? So far there was nothing really new in her views, but when she started explaining to me how "embarrassing" it was for her having her daughter seen together with me – a whitie – I realised that there was no hope, that I had to let her go. I was not prepared to take any chances with a worried mother who had racist attitudes against those with a skin colour such as my own.

The young assistant's mother introduced herself as a person with 45% heart capacity, and told me that she had her heart attack at an early age when she had been stressed by her husband's jealousy. She was a teacher, and was working as a "trainer" for teachers in the southern region. Her husband did not feel confident about the fact that she was travelling and that she met other men through her work and had for years been extremely jealous. She had however never spoken up against him, just tried to act as nobly and nicely as possible to calm him down. She was troubled by his unfair suspicions, was afraid of him, and the stress and fear had got her into this severe condition. During one of her attacks she had a "near death" experience, she said. She had gone through the tunnel to the other side, been in the land of beauty and light, but she could not stay because she heard her daughter's and father's

voices calling her back. After this event her sister had asked her husband to leave the house, never to return. The house and land belonged to his wife and he had his estate in the hill-country where he could move, which he eventually did. When she returned from hospital after a month, she became so worried about her new responsibility for her father, her two daughters and the property and she was so afraid of the dark, that she had another attack and was sent back into hospital again. She had however woken up in the ambulance and found herself calming down her sister and not the other way around. As she said, even then she was thinking about others and not herself. She recovered and then quit her job and decided to think more about herself and take life easy instead. One year later her father died. She then built the house that she was now living in and rented out the other semi-detached house as well as her old house. She now gives private lessons in English at home. The young assistant has an obligation to her mother, she must look after her if anything happens. This situation was also one of the reasons why her mother did not want Young Assistant to take this job. She wanted complete control of her daughter's whereabouts, and as my work required visits in many towns and villages she felt that she would lose control. The mother was quite anxious about her health and had therefore rented out one of the houses to a medical student, another to one that had a car, and the third which at the moment was available she wished to rent out to a doctor with a car. When I then asked Young assistant again why she did not want to sign the contract she confessed that she thought that the job was too hard for her, that she could not imagine going through another night awake at rituals.

Of course I let Young Assistant go. The role that I offered her created too many obstacles, controversies and "threats" in relation to the role expectations connected with her social status as a young unmarried woman. An episode that cut deep into my memory while we were working together was that one day when I and Young Assistant were walking along the main road in a southern town, a woman passing spotted my assistant and fixed a very unpleasant and hateful glare on her. I have never seen such hatred expressed in the eyes of a stranger before, and tried to figure out a plausible reason for it. The assistant on her part just thought it was nothing out of the ordinary and said that it was the woman's way of expressing that Young Assistant should have stayed at home. To me it gave enlightenment into how the women themselves act upon and protect their common female role ideals.

Young Assistant broke these by walking with a white woman (me), who in the view of many, in particular the middle class Lankans, was the representation of sexual scandal, drinking, and other immoral behaviour of their imagination.

2.3.9 The Real Challenge: National Language Policy and Gendered Competence

If I listened to the signals so far gained, it seemed I was asking for the impossible to happen. I stress though that the reasons for the assistant problem were not so much caused by status, caste, norm, race, class or gender, but by the very fact that knowledge of English among Lankans in this historical period was scarce. There were in fact not many people I could ask, especially in the southern province. The people I did meet who knew the language were all already engaged, in education, too young or too old. The Sinhala-only policy since the fifties had made proper knowledge of English an uncommon skill – now only possessed by those from well-off families, talented students, or those belonging to the "exclusive" group of families in Colombo that use English as their social language.

I continued my search for an assistant – but no longer took it for granted that I would find one and hence I put more effort into the matter. I asked friends at various research institutions in Colombo and Kandy for help and finally got some promising connections. However in the end, every single person had more important things to do, while I had naively wasted other chances by patiently waiting. I guess it was the common reluctance to bringing bad news, or to say no, that was at play. However I believe that it would have been less easy for them to deal with the issue in such an irresponsible way if during my research I had had a formal institution affiliation as a point of reference. In my previous fieldwork I was a casual student at the University of Keleniya, a connection whose benefits I now appreciate. It was through the university that I obtained a formal introduction to those who became my key informants then – those that provided the connection with Assistant-X. At that time I was younger, and I suppose my age made it very easy for strangers to just openly show concern. This time I had taken a professional role, and thus failed to find a translator through my "personal relation" system; namely my contacts in the various "teacher – student" systems. After having worked on an ad-hoc basis with about five different assistants, I finally succeeded in my mission through my contacts with the regional NGOs. Through them I hired a highly skilled translator. He was a translator used to working with

"foreigners", used to travelling, and with a genuine interest in local politics and cultural religious subjects – a real catch. His knowledge of local religion was in particular extremely valuable for my research. And most importantly, my informants fully acknowledged him as he was easy-going, had good humour and came from a highly esteemed family in the south. Finally I was able to have good, informative conversations with my informants – my work was rescued.

The academics that I met in Sri Lanka were very well aware of my difficulties in finding a good assistant. They knew that a good research assistant was hard to find. Many of those I spoke with were generous and said that they themselves would have helped me if they had had the time for it. I myself became a key informant for a lecturer in Colombo on the issue of possible problems his own female students would face in the field. In fact he viewed their attempts to make a career as sociologists to be pointless due to the gender roles in the Sri Lankan society – a view that I hope eventually my work has proved wrong. As my success in finding an assistant showed, highly esteemed contacts, a network, and a genuine interest and knowledge do the magic trick. I eventually had success by directing my search outside the university/research milieu and found a brilliant local translator with international work experience to assist me through the network of international NGOs.

2.4 The Critical Aspects of my Field Method

2.4.1 My Ethnic Identity Bias

Because I have been working in the southern province of Sri Lanka, living with a Buddhist Sinhala speaking family, travelling across the province researching the low-country ritual dance traditions as well as cultural politics in Colombo, I have been subjected to the hard core nationalistic Buddhist, Sinhala and Sinhalese patronising understanding of local politics and history. As anthropologists our horizons of knowledge are given by the social positioning that we take in the field and the language that we speak (I adopted the southern dialect of Sinhala). Thus my information on local affairs and analysis of the social situation are biased by the prejudiced views of my informants. I did not explore ethnic conflict issues directly, but many of my informants were interested in hearing my views on the political

situation and the peace process, and wanted to express their own views. I must admit that the role of the Norwegian government in the peace process made me a slightly uncertain about my own safety in fieldwork and about the possible and unintended consequences that might arise when the work was published. It is my hope for this thesis that eventually, and despite my ethnically biased positioning – my political Norwegian body, it will make a contribution to local discourses on cultural processes and aesthetic practices from an ethnically-neutral platform.

2.4.2 Travelling Fieldwork as a Work Method

The objective of my research is to link the institutional and aesthetic aspects of cultural production – to look at the field of cultural production from the perspective of those who play a professional role in the development of our systems of "aesthetic-affective" communication. In order to obtain valid information on both "fields" I just had to travel according to how the network that I worked with operated in the southern and western province as a whole. I regarded the actual productions of the network and how they were organised as a more important focus of study than the cultural policy discourse as such and I therefore gave priority to viewing as many cultural events as possible. The travelling fieldwork method was a consequence of my aim of linking both the national and the local dimensions in my field of study. Looking back I see that I spent very much time putting the minor parts together as no-one had drawn the field of cultural policy map in Sri Lanka previously and I had to learn the system as my work proceeded. There is a debate in the field of anthropology on whether multi-sited and travelling fieldwork can offer the same nearness to the cultural ethos of one's informants and depth of insights and knowledge. Clifford (1997), in his article on "Spatial Practices" neatly summarises the disciplinary problems at issue between more classical fieldwork in one location and the "moving ethnographer". I feel slightly unfamiliar with this discourse as I have never worked with questions that require a traditional village study. In my view, it is what one sets out to discover that is the guide for one's fieldwork – not whether the ethnographer and his/her informants live in one place or many. I never pretended to be someone else in Sri Lanka than a student of cultural issues and I made my research agenda very clear to my informants. However, I had to "go native" to some degree in order to be successful in this task and my social body adapted the gestures, language, codes of demeanour and conduct and diets necessary to be able to play

my research role in a morally and socially acceptable manner. That I played by the rules of my informants was important for them and in return for my efforts they helped me greatly by emphasising my good manners and character to people I met through them. In this way, and by the help of the mutual respect that I enjoyed from my core informants, the "stranger I" became less threatening to new people. I will not claim that I managed perfectly in all situations, but my mistakes were observed with great amusement. In particular they had a good laugh at my many wrong sentences until I corrected the words, and I was glad to be able to give them some fun (and creative input for their many punning joke performances) in return for taking on the hard job it sometimes became to be the "protectors" of the foreign anthropologist on their public missions.

2.4.3 A Note on the Myths and Other Secondary Sources

The material forming the basis for the chapters to follow is drawn from a variety of sources. The myths given in chapter eight from the Rata Yakuma are translations from published books in Sinhala authored by Mr. Tissakariyawasam and Mr. Kotagoda. The myths are translated by Prof. Abeyegonawardena together with myself. The specialised "Yaka language", which is made of a mixture of Sinhala, Tamil, Telegu, Pali, Sanskrit and other South Asian languages used in the myths, is not commonly known and I was quite lucky to get the help of Mr. Abeyegonawardena who had the right qualifications. Unfortunately did I not get the original titles and page numbers right, so I obtain the personal permission to make use of these texts from Mr. Tissakariyawasam and Mr. Kotagoda. The upete kavi, a myth about the origin of the rite Rata Yakuma, was not given in these books and the version of the myth that I present comes from the private collection of the dance teacher at Alfred Crescent, Lionel Bentage. The myths published by Kotagoda in his book on "Kalu Kumare Samayama" are informed by the collection of the Adura Somatilleka who is my own core informant on the Rata Yakuma rite. Mr. Tissakariyawasam, the former head of the department of dance and music at Alfred Crescent, collected his versions of the myths from the teacher of Dharmasena who is another key informant of mine. Dharmasena gave me the book to read and it was only later that I had the honour of meeting Tissakariyawasam himself. I must admit that it was quite frustrating to have my hands full of "original texts" at my informant's houses without being able to translate them on the spot, but this was my only option at the time as their texts could only be copied by hand in their homes. However,

I recorded some very important myths on tape, recited by my informants, which I later had translated. However, I stress that the texts would not have been of any value without my knowledge of the ritual procedures of the "Tovil system" that I had already achieved through my more traditional ritual study on another Tovil rite: The Mahasona Samayama (Larsen, 1998) and which I had continued to develop throughout my many nights at ritual venues.

My search for comparative sources on cultural policy in Asia failed – as no one yet had taken an interest in the link between contemporary culture and the policies that had formed them in this region of the world. Very many have been interested in the "commodity" process that traditional art forms have been subjected to – and the more encompassing discourse on nationalist and ethnic identity politics. The question of how "totalitarian" states such as Sri Lanka are making culture, and its consequences for the development of traditional art forms such as "Tovil dance", was overlooked – and throughout my research period it continued to be a missing link. With such works available at the outset, it would have been much easier to take a classical comparative approach to this work. The search was carried out, among other places, at the NIAS library where they conducted the first professional searches on cultural policy in Asia for me. I also used the RAI library and the British Library while in London, and visited the Public Records Office, where more searches were carried out. When in Paris I went to UNESCO to see if they had any updated information on Cultural Policy issues in Asia apart from what was published on the internet but they had not. Desperate as I was, I also went to the library of the Arts Council in England as they after all are the model for all other Cultural Policy bodies in the world – but there I just obtained information (nonetheless highly relevant) about the history of the body in general.

Lastly, I will mention that I over many years spoke quite frequently with Prof. Bruce Kapferer on the Tovil issue, and some ideas of his are therefore mentioned in the text without reference to any academic work.

2.5 Summing Up

I carried out "travelling fieldwork" where I followed the ritual specialists, the Aduras, on their very many assignments in the Southern Province of Sri Lanka. The network of the

Aduras included civil servants and academics involved in the preservation and promotion of traditional dance in Sri Lanka – people who have informed the part of this thesis which concerns the cultural policy effects on contemporary developments of "Tovil dance". The method was suitable in regard to the questions of this study, particularly since I set out to look into the national dimension of "Tovil dance" and its many contemporary uses in popular culture, and not the more classic study of the social dimension of rituals and cultural studies on the community level. The political and social situation both on the national level as well as in global geopolitics changed tremendously during my research period, from 2001 – 2003 in particular, and created some unforeseen challenges for my fieldwork. One important part of it was the way my Norwegian national identity gave me a political status that I had not expected. To work during the summer/autumn of 2001 became particularly difficult as, firstly, the "public programs" were put on hold, secondly, rituals became scarce, thirdly, it became difficult to find an assistant to travel around with me as people in general found the social situation risky, and fourthly, because I was very badly positioned in the field. From January 2002 onwards a peace process between the LTTE and the Government was put into motion and as a result the social/political context became more stable and people in general were more at ease, and my work progress speeded up significantly. My general fieldwork method developed from a "participant observation" inspired method where I just followed the work of the Aduras in their own phasing and control during my first fieldwork trip into one where I took a much more instrumental and active role. Without the months spent at the cultural performance venues I stress, I would not have been able to design the interview guides and cases in the manner that I did during my second fieldwork trip. I worked closely with assistants throughout all of my fieldwork trips and unlike in the first fieldwork trip, in the second, I became dependent on very many different assistants to carry out my research. At last however I found the "assisting brain" that my work required, and I was able to finish off the work in a successful manner. Moreover, the search for an assistant taught me many a valuable lesson on how others perceived me as a person. The fieldwork experience in general showed me many more aspects about the vulnerability faced by local women in relation to their participation in the public sphere.

Back in Europe I continued my research in a great range of libraries and academic environments and I have enjoyed many conversations with scholars that have contributed to this

work. Moreover the secondary sources made available to me by several institutions are of invaluable importance for the final result.



Modern dance performance at Lionel Wendts in Colombo

3 "TOVIL DANCE" IN CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE

3.1 Cultural Performances

3.1.1 Cultural Performances in the Making

Anthropologists have a long tradition of exploring the social and cultural significance of cultural practices such as rituals, and, like Don Handelman in his work "Models and mirrors" (1990 (1998)), to look into different categories of events organised by various communities for communion and the symbolic structuring of power hierarchies. However, the field of ritual studies engages a cross-disciplinary crowd of scholars. For instance, the theatre expert Elisabeth Fischer-Lichte in "Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual – Exploring forms of political theatre" (2005) has looked into the historical continuity between contemporary political theatre – a ceremonial practice exemplified by performances from the USSR, the USA and Germany – and situates the development of the first known literately based theatre tradition of the "West" ; the Greek tragedy, in the practice of "ritual sacrifice", which is perceived as primitive from the modern position. Of interest for us here is that Fischer is concerned about the performance aspect of theatre and related cultural practices, and brings, through her focus on the actual performance of the spectacle, play or performances in question, evidence that a wide range of performances, through the power of embodied

aesthetic experience, efficiently engage a sense of communal union in historical periods of communal disintegration and social changes. The knowledge gained by scholars on comparative studies of rituals as summarised by the religious historian Catherine Bell in her work; "Ritual – Perspectives and dimensions" (1997), (where Van Gennep, Turner and Geertz are exemplified as the most influential anthropologists) has again, as Bell shows, throughout the last century influenced architects of political ceremonial practice, political theatre, the performances of the "Avant Garde" artists, and many esoteric self enhancing (new-age) ritual practices worldwide. Her work makes the dialectical nature of cultural performances urgent through her demonstration of how theories of "traditional" ritual practice influence the composition of contemporary ritual practice, and the other way around. This dialectical process works in many directions and for instance, the trained anthropologist and contemporary artist Susan Hiller takes ritual practice as a theme for many of her art installations, and through her work she mediates and challenges existing perceptions and theories of the inter-relationship between the social, the arts and ritual work (InIva 1999, Robinson in Shneider & Wright, 2006).

In her article: "Global Anxieties: Concept-Metaphors and Pre-Theoretical Commitments in Anthropology" from 2004, Henrietta Moore addresses the fact that for contemporary anthropologists the lines between theoretical analysis and cultural production are fictional as the fields dialectically constitute each other. In my own research I came across a case where a theatre director was in the field of operation which Moore addresses – he was in the business of employing in his own theatre production the concept metaphors developed by anthropologists and orientalists in Said's (1978) sense of the term as a system of "ideological" fictions. Discussing the play with the theatre director I learned that the script was influenced by his readings of Freud and classical ritual theory that classed ritual performance as a psychodynamic process, but also the Freudian notion of the oedipal relation of a son and his mother. The Ritual is a play about a man whose wife is low caste and who has been accepted without a dowry. The wife lives in the house of her mother-in-law together with her husband and her lover who is her brother-in-law. The play has the many emotional and sexual tensions that exist between the four at its core, and the wife's feeling of guilt, her lack of self confidence and "demonically ridden self" are at the centre of the drama. The psychodynamic theoretical influence from Freud aside, of more urgent

interest for this chapter is that the director of the theatre play has made use of ritual performance elements from the "Tovil system" and written a play script in which the characters are placed within a fictional world with reference to the social lifeworld of the communities that engage with the "Tovil system". It is moreover a play that is performed in a particular historical period for a community positioned at the top of the intellectual, social and economic power-centre in Colombo, and yet is in the periphery of the dominating high and mainstream culture engaging with the religious domain. I will come back to the play below, but first, among other things, a note on cultural flows and their productive mode.

3.1.2 Cultural Flows and their Productive Mode

In this chapter I intend to identify some of the complexity involved in the study of cultural performances, and show that such performances employ a great variety of concepts and that the aesthetic dimension of such performances is crucial for engaging our "sensus communis" which to Ranciere, as I mentioned in the introductory chapter, is the premise for the existence of social worlds. It is also my hope to demonstrate how the analytical notion of concept can help in making a sound analysis of how cultural performances become integrated parts of our social worlds and are able to affect, constitute and transform our cultural ethos. I do admire the great effort taken by anthropologists such as Handelman (1990 (1998)) as discussed in the introduction, who set out to reveal some "universal" ontological principles of all cultural performances – they set out to be able to analyse and predict their transformative capacities. To me, however, the complexity of our semiotic worlds is so multifaceted that it is my belief that the possible effects generated by a performance such as the play "the Ritual", continue to be greater than the play's concepts, its intentional ends, its existence in time/space, its aesthetic, functional and conceptual parts. In order to be able to perform fruitful analysis of comparison in the task of addressing wider questions concerning cultural change and the social aspects of cultural performances I suggest one should look into the "aesthetic plane of composition" of cultural performances and map their compositional concepts, cast members, aesthetic technology, dramaturgy, aesthetic and existential mood on the one hand and the social and institutional aspect of the performance on the other as all these factors define the kinaesthetic/semiotic meaning mediated through the work in its time/space/context; its power dimension and pragmatic ends.

3.1.3 Cultural Flows and their Productive Mode

As stated at the outset, I have in this work taken on the ambition suggested by Marcus (Moore, 2004: 77) "of representing something of the operation of the (Tovil) system itself rather than to demonstrate continually and habitually in the spirit of pluralism, the power of local culture over global forces of apparent homogenisation." The case of "the Ritual" which is considered here nonetheless demonstrates the multiplex nature of cultural practices – and the imprints of the global "traffic in culture", in the words of Marcus and Meyer (1995) – which the "cultural producers" of Sri Lanka are also subjected to. It is an undeniable cultural and social fact that traditional religious performances at present operate within historically young public spheres and media. To explore the innovative features of contemporary performance and public ceremonial events where the aesthetic regime of "Tovil dance" is employed in performance is an important aim of this thesis. In order to help shed light on the dynamics of how traditional religious performances such as "Tovil dance" transgress the conventional borders of practice and process cultural change I suggest that it is crucial to look into the interplay between the social/public, the aesthetic and the institutional aspects of the process. The case of the play, "the Ritual" therefore extends into the wider field of religious expressions of popular culture, rituals and ceremonial practices addressed in the thesis. In short, based on the insights of Marcus and my own research experience, it is my aim to look into the aesthetic components and different aesthetic registers of the play, "the Ritual", which I viewed during my time of research in Sri Lanka, as well as the general question of what are the concepts and "ends" of the performances in which "Tovil dance" is employed as a dramaturgical element. Bell's (1997) work provides highly workable analytical concepts for classification and contextualisation and of a wide range of cultural performances which are useful for this endeavour. Consequently I will introduce below her model for classification and systematic exploration and illustrate this with examples from my own records of cultural performances in Sri Lanka. Before coming to that however, it is necessary to say something about the features and characteristics of "Tovil dance" as an aesthetic regime.

3.1.4 "Tovil dance" as an Art Form and an Aesthetic Regime

"Being incorporated by the dancer as a kinaesthetic, affective and mental representation, dance is not the repository of meaning but produces meaning each time it is performed"

states Giurchescu (2001: 112) in her article on the power of dance and its social and political uses. My own cases confirm her claims that dance as an art form processes subjective transformations and by its capacity of being a kinaesthetic language is highly transgressive and can be adapted to many arenas. In order to get to terms with the polysemic nature of dance Giurchescu (2001: 112) has identified some "levels" of meaning mediated through dance which she has identified as the aesthetic, conceptual, symbolic, the metonymic relation with social worlds, and an artistic-spectacular level. With her levels as a guide it is now my ambition to look into some of the features of "Tovil dance" as an art form and as an aesthetic regime, and consider some of its urgent social, religious and cultural involvements. As an art form dance is polysemic and serves multiple ends. Dance evokes and expresses human sentiments and emotions; dance is a creation of and in a moment. It is temporary, kinetic, and involves a sense of space and time. Dance manifests physical energy – dance creates prints in air. In Sri Lankan rituals it is useful for pleading with gods, it is conceived as form of sound (mantra/yantra dialectics principle), a language of communication between beings of every world; it breaks illusions and engages the forces of the cosmos. As bodily movement it serves as a demarcation of space, of territory. Dance can be a part of a spectacle, it can be put in motion for pure entertainment; it can be gestures manifesting superiority or as a communal shared body language. It can represent social identity, or can enable transgression of social taboos and of the body and self particularly, through trance; dance as gesture serves as a codified language. Dance is moreover normative, its affective motion is received ethically by the spectator in terms of artistic achievements and moral standards.

Inspired by Goodman's philosophical text on "Ways of worldmaking" (1978) on the phenomenology of arts where he among, other things, sets out to explore types and functions of symbols and symbol systems and how our "lifeworlds" come in different versions and our aesthetic systems of expression come in various styles Felicia Hughes Freeland, who has worked on court dance traditions in Java as a professional dancer and an anthropologist, states that: "Dancing is a way of making a world because it extends beyond movement, beyond the body, through the responses of actor-dancers in relation to memory and expectations. Dancing dance and inscribing dance, whether in talking, writing or visual forms, are both situated social practices. Dance is something which Javanese people do, and

something Javanese people do things with" (2008: 23). "Tovil dance" as an art form has been subjected to a similar process and is no longer restricted to religious rituals in Sri Lanka. "Tovil dance" today forms a kinaesthetic language embraced by the "Buddhist Sinhalese" as their common heritage and an embodied expression of their cultural identity. In Hughes-Freeland's understanding, such a position is given to the art form because: "Dance helps us understand the relationship between embodied and imagined communities, and between social control and conformity and personal freedom and self-realization. It is because it is embodied that dance is a powerful political symbol. Combining a political analysis of dance with attention to embodied dance movement, intrinsic and extrinsic approaches, gives insight into the cultural significance of dance movement and the social context in which it is produced and also produced, in this case the real and imagined communities of the nation state" (2008: 237). In other words, dance bridges the lifeworld of embodied beings and their social worlds. The engagement with the art form, creates both an aesthetic mode of being and social communities as nation states. "Tovil dance" forms a classical system of movement sequences; one which is dense, conventional and distinguishable in form, style and expression. It is my view that it is the very compositional complexity of "Tovil dance" and the high aesthetic achievement of the professional dancers of the art form that makes "Tovil dance" a field that encourages artistic innovation and development. The context from which "Tovil dance" originally developed, as a dance which in the semantic domain is the "language of gods", to use Nurnberger's term (1998) is however an important aspect of the art form as it places it within the religious domain. "Tovil dance" developed in connection with royal ceremonies, harvesting rites and the "Tovil system"'s great repertoire of curing rites of Sinhalese Buddhist kings and communities.



Just as a reminder, in Sri Lanka, drumming and dancing go together – "Tovil dance" in contemporary performance thus includes the orchestration of the drum. The sound offering – Sabdha pudjava – is "mandatory" in most (Buddhist) religious and public ceremonies. .

"Tovil dance" is moreover an art form known by many more than the initiated ritual specialists from the traditional caste (Bereva), a situation created by the establishment of more than 1200 dance schools (in 2003) around the country. The public performance of the dance form is not restricted to the rituals of the "Tovil system" of which the Aduras (Bereva) are ritual specialists. Contemporary "Tovil dance" rs also participate in the temple processions (perahera), national ceremonies and traditional art shows that are all social inventions of the last century (Seneviratne, 1978). There are for instance state supported dance troupes (of artistic excellence) that since the 1960s have toured the world. Conjointly a separate secular field of stage dance has developed. Dance drama was recently recognised as a separate field of dance practice and has now, together with traditional dance and Indian dance, its own board in the Arts Council. Moreover, central dancers in Sri Lanka have benefited form the international programs run by some embassies in relation to their training, support for productions, and visiting programs. Some of the central contemporary dancers are in fact educated in Western modern and classical dance abroad on scholarships. In Colombo there are therefore also a cluster of choreographers working with "cross-over" projects fusing local and foreign dance and music expressions such as our example in this chapter; the play "the Ritual". Unlike the dance choreographer who works with music, light, visual imagery, poses and movement patterns, the director of this play keeps a steady position within the theatre and is faithful to the textual base of the drama. I stress that

theatrical performances such as our play: "the Ritual" are not explicitly perceived by my informants to engage with religious worlds even in productions where "Tovil dance" is used of as a style of expression.

3.1.5 A Guide to the Classification of Cultural Performances

Catherine Bell (1997) has identified the most common types of rituals, and has thus facilitated scientific explorations of the kind which I am now about to draw on. The categories identified by her are: "rites of passage – life cycle rites", "calendrical and commemorative rites", "rites of exchange and communion", "rites of affliction", "rites of feasting fasting and festivals" and finally, "political rituals". For Bell, ritual-like activities come with some distinctive features which she recognises as: formalism, traditionalism, invariance, rule-governance and performance. Drawing on her findings I would say that ritual activities are rule-governed performances of a fixed aesthetic composition that are performed because it is customary to do so and because they come with a promise of serving defined phenomenal ends. In comparison, Handelman suggests that the features of identification of public events are: "Formality, replicability, intentionality, symbolic formation, and a connectivity that extends beyond itself" (Ibid., 1990: 13). In other words, a public event and a ritual activity have very similar features.

In the Sri Lankan cultural context there are rites created to accompany any recognisable moment of personal or social transition – and thus there are also rites of any of the kinds identified by Bell to be researched in the Lankan cultural/religious pool. To me therefore her scheme of genres comes across as sound. The first category is rites of passage – rites which set out to transform the social identity of a person, to reorient the subject in his social world, often in relation with important moments of transition as birth, youth, marriage and death. In this work these are exemplified by the "big girl to become" ritual presented in chapter 5. Samskaras is the Sanskrit term for life cycle rituals in the South Asian context. The term Samskaras in short, means rites of purification, and the rites prepare the individual to reach overarching ritual goals, to advance his destiny, to gain better rebirths and much more (Bell 1997). As I will show, the key activities in the puberty rite "Big girl to become" are various sorts of acts of ritual purification and therefore fit well into the South Asian Samskara category. An example of calendrical, or seasonal rites, is the Gamaduva ritual – a rite that

celebrates the fertility goddess Pattini and as such in Bell's (1997) terms, imposes a cultural scheme on the order of nature. The enclosing and opening acts of this ritual are used at the beginning and end of the first national dance festival organised in Sri Lanka to be described below – ritual acts which through the symbolic forms employed in the ritual actions celebrate the prosperity of nature. A ritual that recalls important historical events in Sri Lanka is the popular Vesak celebration – the national feast for the birthday of Gautama Buddha. The celebration of the 2500th birthday of Gautama Buddha in 1956 fuelled the sentiments of the rising "Buddhist nationalist movement" in Sri Lanka. As the religious historian Eliade stated, the potential of commemorative rites is that: "ritual re-enactment of founding events is able to generate a meaningful, mythic and cyclical sense of time, a temporal sense in which it is as if the original events are happening all over again" (Bell, 1997: 108). In Sri Lanka this particular Vesak celebration became historical as it united the ethnic majority – the Buddhist Sinhalese – in their quest for re-establishing a "homogenous Buddhist reign" of the country (see chapter 7). They wished to make the great civilisation of Anhuradhapura "happen all over again as argued for by Bruce Kapferer in his work "Legends of people, myths of state" (1988).

Moreover, in their daily lives Sri Lankans engage with a rich variety of rites of exchange and communion. According to Bell, these rites: "reveal very complex relations of mutual interdependence between humans and the divine" (Ibid: 109). Every day my hosts in Sri Lanka offered tea, water, flowers, scent and rice to Buddha and their favourite gods at the house altar. In other words, they did a pudjava, which according to Bell's categories is a simple gift which expresses their respect for their gods. A pudjava is therefore also an act of communion between gods and the devotee. In Bell's categories the sacrifice is perceived as a more elaborate gift of communion. Different from a simple gift, a sacrifice is a consecrated offering. The devotees bring plates of fruit to the temples, and this fruit is then blessed by the priest and the "flavour/essence" becomes consumed by the gods and is then shared by the devotees. Sacrifices to less fortunate gods,or sacrifices that includes impure substances, are however destroyed after "supernatural consumption". Bell continues and says that: "whether the purpose is to avert evil, placate gods, achieve communion, reconstruct idealized kinship relations, or establish a proper reciprocity of heaven and earth, the offering of something; fruits, paper money, or human beings, has a common ritual mechanism for

securing the well-being of the community and the larger cosmos" (Ibid: 114). It is the transacting nature of the offerings which Bell here identifies, the transactional "by offering so to you, you should in return" principle, that generates the interdependency/inter-relationship between beings of all worlds in the Sri Lankan Buddhist pantheon.

The Yak Tovil rituals come under the category of Rites of Affliction. In Bell's words these rituals: "rectify a state of affairs that has been disturbed or disordered; they heal, exorcise, protect and purify" (Ibid: 115). Of major concern for this field of ritual studies is the conception of "ritual efficacy", or how these rites can be said to bring about a cure. Bell is positive that curing rites have the claimed effects and states that: "ritual responses to illness have proven quite capable of effecting psychotherapeutic cures. A number of psychological mechanisms appear to come into play, while the process itself provides an exhausting emotional catharsis in which clients must confront personal fears and social tensions temporarily embodied and demanding reconciliation" (Ibid: 117). The study of the "Tovil system" as a ritual healing system is quite extensive (see chapter 4). A common point of departure for theories employed in these works is as Bell confirms, the psychologist Freud's research on the therapeutic value of rituals and possible curing effects caused by revelatory imageries for the mentally ill. The common analysis of the ritual process of the Tovils is moreover inspired by the work of the anthropologist Victor Turner and his elaborate theory of the transformative capacities affiliated with the ritual actions carried out throughout what he called the "liminal" stage in the ritual process. A complex elaboration of the Turnerian (1967 (1995)) "liminal model" inspired by Susan Langer's theory of "Feeling and form" – aesthetics and virtuality, Husserl's phenomenology and the philosophers Deleuze and Guattari's "psychological phenomenological aesthetical neo structuralism" is developed by Bruce Kapferer in his study of an anti-sorcery rite of the "Tovil system" which is named the "Suniyama". In this work the Turnerian concept of "liminality" is extended by a notion of "virtuality", and as such includes the multi-sensorial aesthetic technologies of the ritual work. Moreover the ritual process of Turner, which follows the structure of a movement from a separation, liminal, and reintegration phase, is addressed by Kapferer in a model which distinguishes the subjective experience engaged through the virtual time/space compression of a rite and its ritual technology from "the real", by distinguishing between the phenomenal realities as actuality and virtuality. Consequently, the theoretical perspective developed by

Kapferer not only represents an inclusion of an phenomenological theory of "reason" and subjective transformations into the Turnerian model of the ritual process, but the concept of "virtuality" also includes a multi-dimensional model of the sensorial experience evoked by the aesthetic technology employed in rituals such as a Tovil rite. Music, dance, chants, texts and mime in performance. Its homogeneity with the experience and narrative for the "suffering experienced" by the patient in the rites, becomes, according to this theory a vivid part of the ritual process towards subjective transformations – healing. The Vedic "sacrifice" has moreover inspired the Tovil ritual design and the sacrifice as a generative gesture of honour, as a transaction between humans and the cosmic being with an agency in the misfortunate situation/condition is employed in the ritual process. The Tovils are, in Bell's category, a rite of affliction, but through their compositional structures and themes, rites of exchange, and communion they are also rites of purification.

Feasting, fasting and festivals are the last cultural/religious category of rites addressed by Bell and these events display both the hierarchical prestige social system and the interdependence or unity of human and divine worlds (Ibid: 128). The most thorough study of such a festival occasion in Sri Lanka is the book on the Asala Perahera at the temple of the tooth in Kandy by Seneviratne. Our example, however poor in detail, from pilgrimages in Chapter 1 is another. Our main concern in chapter 6 is a case from the national dance festival. The first national dance festival became an event dislocated from the traditional "temple festival" context, where peraheras like the Asala Perahera described by Seneviratne (1978), processions in the honour of gods and the constitution of the local social hierarchy, move through the streets of Colombo for the celebration of national union and international affiliations. Since the national dance festival was made on the initiative of politicians and was a conceptual creation of agents in public cultural bodies, this case has some features in common with political rites: "ceremonial practices that specifically construct, display and promote the power of political institutions… or the political interests of distinct constituencies or subgroups" (Ibid: 128). Moreover, in such events: "in the cosmological mode, this 'dramaturgy of power' involves the creation of comprehensive ritual systems that raise the ruler above normal human interaction" (Ibid: 130). To imitate the features and positions of gods through social/religious ceremonial action is a common strategy used by many politicians in their quest for power in the South Asian context, as discussed by

Corbridge and Harris (2000) Van der Veer (1994), Blom Hansen (1999) and Tambiah (1992) on South Asian religious nationalism. These works mirror Bell's findings that: "In general, political rites define power in a two-dimensional way: first, they use symbols and symbolic action to depict a group of people as a coherent and ordered community based on shared values and goals; secondly they demonstrate the legitimacy of these values and goals by establishing their iconicity with the perceived values and order of cosmos" (Ibid: 129). The celebration of Hon. Minister Kodhituvakku at John DeSilva, which will be discussed in chapter 6, is, despite its small-scale audience and exclusivity, an example of a political ritual which involves gestures of honour with a significant degree of religious symbolism, and where the ritual procedures communicate a continuation between religious affairs and the work of the Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs.

3.1.6 The Social Dimension of Theatre, Rituals and Events

Despite their many differences, scholars on ritual practice are equivocal in regard to that form of theatre, performance, dance and drama. Rituals bring about shared aesthetic experience and as such form a basis for communal identity – a sense of co-existence and belonging. The encompassing social significance of the cultural/religious ethos of the Buddhist Sinhalese makes the many rituals an: "integral part of a holistic regio cultural way of life. Such orthopraxic traditions are experienced as cultural communities often defined in ethnic or racial terms – to which one automatically belongs by birth" (Bell, 1997: 194). A possible explanation for how the "sensus communis" is brought about comes from Fischer-Lichte who is inspired by the theories of Max Herrmann on theatre: "It is the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators constitutive of a performance which allows it to come into being… performance is taking place between actors and spectators… the performance calls for a social community since it is rooted in one, and on the other hand, since in its course it brings forth a social community that unites actors and spectators. Theatre thus, appears to be an important community-building institution" (Fischer-Lichte, 2005: 23). Fischer-Lichte takes her argument a little further and suggests not only that all sorts of performance developed from the ancient social/religious practice of ritual sacrifices – for her it is also the very: "enactment of shared experiences (through performance) that allowed for a community to come into existence" (Ibid: 258).

However, performance of rituals, events, or theatre does not only bring about a sense of community or enforce the constitution of communities. According to Bell, the anthropologist Leach: "pioneered the idea of ritual as an intellectual operation in which the categories affirmed as the cultural order can be transgressed" (1997: 65). As shown above, there are many kinds of ritual and they are created to serve many social and subjective aims. Clifford Geertz came up with comparable ideas for why rituals come with such transformative qualities by looking into how: "The symbols of religious beliefs and the symbolic activities of religious ritual constitute a system of values that acts as both 'a model of' the way things actually are and 'a model for' how they should be…(and) project idealized imagery of a symbolic situation… In Geertz's description, ritual enables a group's ethos and worldview – that is their attitudes and their general concepts of world order – to temper and nuance each other" (Bell, 1997: 66 -67). The theory of Geertz emphasises the continuity between ritual activities and people's lived-in realities, and as such accepts the cosmic models of communities' lifeworlds for real as it is the reality one creates and lives by. The urgency of rituals and their symbolic and phenomenal homogeneity with lived-in realities enables social and subjective transformation to be processed through ritual activities. And as mentioned above, to Eliade "the restoration of primordial chaos and the repetition of the cosmogonic process (through rituals) effectively abolished past time and afforded a new regenerative beginning… realisation of the rebirth of the cosmos" (Bell, 1997: 18). Geertz's (and Eliade's) model applies brilliantly in the rites that I have seen in Hindu Bali where the recreation of the cosmic world of the supernaturals is employed in any great religious festival. The miniature world model is moulded by all sorts of foods, drinks, minerals, animals, birds etc; all substances of the real world. The greater the selection, the more powerful the model. The basic idea is that a consecrated ritually purified model of the world created for the gods purifies the physical world and re-enacts the fortunate gods' dominance, freeing people from evil influence. In Bell's words there is a: "Cosmic ordering: re-creation of perfect harmony between the human and divine realms" (1997: 187).

3.1.7 "Tovil dance" in "Classic Cultural Performance"

In short, in a Tovil rite in the category of a rite of affliction, "Tovil dance" is performed for the patient, the audience present and the supernaturals. A rite in a performance sets out to cure the patient and restore the cosmic imbalance brought forth by the impure

supernaturals' existence in the human realm – which in the Buddhist pantheon is above their abode of authorised access. It is a rite of affliction in Bell's terms and through the ritual procedures the patient is purified from the impure substances, "disti", brought on them through the influence of the malevolent spirits. It is a rite of transaction in the sense that the food offerings are substitutes for the "essence" of the patient, and throughout the ritual the Aduras invite the demons causing the patient's suffering to come to the "Vidiya", the offering shed, and plead with them, offer treats, and command them to give up the patient and in the end (for instance) to "fly away". However, the ritual procedures carried out are quite different in regard to density, duration, dramaturgy and artistic elaboration.

In the ritual drama of a Tovil rite, the symbolic process involved, in Turner's meaning of the concept, is that of objectifying the subjective "imaginary" demons troubling the patient and through this symbolic process enable the patient to control his fears of the demon and to break their illusions. The demons dealt with in such rituals are illness causing, and in relation to the case to be discussed I emphasise that the patient treated in the system does not refer to the demons in terms of the mask figurations known from the rites, but suspects their presence due to sudden fears experienced in encounters with poltergeist phenomena and "ghostly beings" and "objects", if they had been encountered at auspicious places in polluted states which they could connect with later occurring symptoms of psycho somatic illnesses. In my view, the category of Bell's rite of transaction applies to the Tovils due to the deal made between the "victim" and its "supernatural" of processing a ritual cure only if the patient recovers after the diagnostic thread is tied in the first place. The symbolic process involved in the Tovil rites is thus secondary to the cure. What the rituals process on "the plane of aesthetics" in the view of the Aduras' is the rasa aesthetical goal of balancing the sentiments and pleasing the mind.

Next I will present the play "the ritual" which, due to its theme, ideographic inspirations and performance elements, interfaces with the "Tovil system" in very many ways. As the play is a fictional invention that in its scriptural form transgresses both time and place, I have chosen to present the play first and then look into apparent influences in its process of creation, its place in the history of Sri Lankan dramaturgical arts, and its social aspects. I thus introduce:

3.2 The case of "The Ritual", a play by Center Stage Productions

3.2.1 "The Ritual"

A stage performance in one act
Inspired by: Koalam mask theatre –" Tovil dance" and Avant-Garde theatre

Written and directed by: Jehan Aloysius
Presented by: Centre Stage Productions
At the: British Council Garden
On the: April 5–7 2002
Preferably for adults only – due to use of rough, explicit language

Cast:
Tracy Holsinger as Karuna,
Avanthi Perera as Ariyawathi,
Anushka Pereira as Kalani,
Vishvamitra Ahangama as Sudjiva,
Director Jehan Aloysius as Chandra
Shanaka Perera, Ranga Sovis, Rasan Amintha and Michael Jayewardene as masked pantomimic demons and drummers.

3.2.2 The Set

A temporary stage inspired by the style of a traditional "koalam maduva" (theatre shed) is put up outdoors in the shallow front garden of The British Council building – just off the nowadays gridlocked Dublication rd at Bambalapitiya, Colombo 4. Outdoor performances are common in the remote areas of Sri Lanka, but not in Colombo. At least not plays performed for the kind of audience that have gathered tonight, the ex-pats and anglophile elite and members of the upper-middle-class. The audience are seated on chairs fronting the stage, and altogether they number about a hundred. The stage set shows us a simply furnished kitchen as is common in a house of indigenous village people. The walls are made of bricks, with an earthen or wooden floor, windows without glass and curtains in the openings where there ideally should have been doors; it is a house which is still under

construction. In the front on the right hand side of the stage, there is a kind of fireplace equipped with a kerosene oil stove and a stool to sit on. On the left there are two chairs, one placed on each side of a small dining table with a stool put underneath in case of visitors. In the background there are a small collection of various special kitchen utensils commonly used in Lankan cooking, such as the wooden-coconut-scraper-bench, the stone on which ones uses a "rolling stone" to make all kinds of spice or vegetable paste, and the "rice-husk-remover-fan" (kulle) that is made out of plant fibre. The "wall" of the house at the back of the set is made out of bricks and mud with a stairway fixed to it. As the play proceeds we learn that this stairway leads to many imaginary places. For the residents it is the way to the outside, but it is also the pathway bringing the outside, the social world, inside. Moreover the stairway leads into what, throughout the play, we learn to think of as bedroom chambers. The stage is lit up with red and yellow spotlights, giving the place a warm and cosy but nonetheless a slightly foreboding atmosphere. The music chosen for the play is soft Asian flute music as well as the southern Lankan Yak-bere drum music from the Yak Tovil tradition – music that underscores the dramatic tension in the atmosphere of dread and cosiness in the play.

3.2.3 The Characters

Karuna: An anxious middle-aged widow of a plantation worker that has raised up her sons on her own since they're now in their teens, making a living out of producing homemade jaggery and pickles. She is respected by her neighbours, but might have too high ambitions for her sons. Her sons have an immature dependent relationship with their mother, a situation which their mother continuously takes advantage of. Dressed up in a long piece of flowery patterned cloth wrapped around her waist, a short waist sari blouse, and with her long grey hair tied up in a knot at her neck, she, like the other women in the play who are dressed in a similar way, portrays the common poor women of the village. The name Karuna means pathetic.

Kalani: A troubled but nonetheless highly rational and pretty young woman from a poor family. She is married to the eldest son of Karuna, Chandra, but faces serious problems adjusting to her new life at the house of her mother-in-law.

Chandra: A melancholic type in his mid-thirties who works as a drummer and dancing teacher. He is married to Kalani and loves her truly, but like most Lankan men he cannot fully free himself from his mothers will, love, and as in this case, displeasure. Although he is the silent kind, through the drama his capacity for violence breaks the surface.

Sudjiva: "Chandra's younger brother. He is a playful young man in his late twenties, and seems to do nothing special for a living. He does however love to tease his neighbours while doing ordinary things such as stealing mangos. He is the lover of his brother's wife.

Ariyawathi: The dangerously observant village scandalmonger. She is skilled in magical matters; not that she would do anyone harm of course. She is an elderly woman and the best friend of Karuna.

I have seen the play twice, and there was a gap of 1 1/2 years between the performances and both the script and the cast had changed a bit between these performances. Consequently the play described is neither one of the two I saw but a fine mixture of both.

3.2.4 The Play

- Kalani, Karuna and Chandra enter the stage. Simultaneously mimetic mask-dancers that mirror their characters play out their "demonic selves" caught in a game with the seducing demon, "Kalu Kumarea", the black prince. The music is a composition starting out with soft flute music building up to an orchestrated dramatic climax. In the act, Kalani is drawn between her husband the drummer and the alluring spirit "Kalu Kumarea" while the rumour-monger Ariyawathi peeks at them from the edge of the stage.

- The sound of whirling wind, shouts, and the guitar introduce the act to follow. Kitchen accidents happen all the time. Ariyawathi is visiting at Karuna's and telling the latest news about a suspicious death of a woman in the village which most likely was a case of dowry burning i.e. the bride had been killed off by her groom because her family had refused to pay an additional dowry for their daughter. In her view, the mother and son had got rid of the wife and daughter in law, as she had not managed to meet her dowry obligations since marriage, but the official truth was that it was a kerosene lamp accident. Kalani hears the

story and becomes wary. After Ariyawathi leaves she sits staring into the fire while three masked figures enters the stage moving with the rhythm of the sound of the yak bere and the roars of a lion.

- Karuna finds Kalani in the kitchen playing with the fire. Kalani is however unaware of the danger of the situation as she is deep in thought and by accident burns her hand. In fear caused by the incident, Karuna scolds Kalani and accuses her daughter-in-law of madness, uselessness, and of being a curse to her house. At first, Kalani tries to ignore her but Karuna keeps on yelling, and she yells so wickedly that Kalani loses her temper, gets up, and slaps her mother-in-law in the face and runs out of the house. Through the narration of the act the masked character portraying Kalu Kumara appears behind her acting as her puppeteer. When Chandra comes home from work, Mother tells him about the incident. Mother says that she is worried about the mental health of Wife, and that Kalani is not much help for her in the kitchen, and when he is at work she is "running here and there". Karuna ends the dialogue by foreseeing that one day the demon lusting for women, "Kalu Kumarea", will take Kalani into his possession.

- Time goes by and one day at dinner, Karuna brings up the delicate matter of barrenness with Elder son. After two years of marriage, no grandchild has yet been born. Village hearsay has heated up the issue. Her great wish of having grandchildren is seemingly out of reach, but why? Karuna is concerned and asks her son frankly if it is him or his wife that is infertile; does he know how babies are made? If he wants her to, she can ask for help from a village priest in order to check if any spells have been cast or if there is malevolent influence of spiritual agency that is hampering their attempts to get pregnant. Chandra is obviously worried by the problem himself, and gives an angry response to his Mother for bringing up the issue and is furious about her claims and advice.

- Karuna however, does not heed Elder son's signs of unease, and goes on accusing his wife of being a curse to their house once again. Mother therefore gets desperate when she realises that Chandra is remaining supportive to his wife. Chandra is enraged by his mother's discontent, slaps her in the face and runs out. He regrets having done so however,

and returns. He falls into the arms of his mother who "hums" and comforts him. She says that he needs her: "You see you need me".

- Kalani and Chandra are seated together by the fireplace where Chandra embraces Kalani in a loving manner. He attempts to make love with her, but when hinting about it she manages to escape the situation, and finds a safe refuge in the common activity of tea making: Is he sure that he does not want a cup of tea? Disappointed of course, he gets up and sits down by the table. Kalani herself stares into the fire and has visions of "Kalu Kumarea" attacking her.

- The lovers of forbidden affairs have a stolen moment on the kitchen floor, Karuna and Chandra have gone to the "sorcerer" the Vedda mahattea. Satisfied and full of youthful courage the lovers plan to run away together, to go to Colombo and make a new start. What he does not know is that Kalani has had second thoughts about following this plan. She has grown loyal to her husband Chandra. She thus says that she cannot flee, as she does not want to hurt him unjustly. Through this act we get to see a cheerful side of Kalani. She has seduced Brother-in-law, and taught him everything that he knows about sex. She says he thinks she loves Chandra, and is just sleeping with her lover Sudjiva. Kalani says that she married Chandra, not out of love but because no one else wanted to. She had such a small dowry. She believes that the only reason Chandra for his part chose her as his bride was in order to oppose his mother. Kalani says that she worries about the claims of Karuna who repeatedly says that she is cursed. She says she has doubts regarding her own sanity.



• Milk rice, jaggery, mango pickles, tea and other goodies, nothing is good enough for the pregnant Kalani in the eyes of Karuna. She works cheerfully to give her the best treats imaginable. Karuna therefore sends her son out to pick mangos (or more accurately, to steal mangos) from three of her neighbours, but is surprised to note that he is all dressed up. Chandra comes home and sits down by the table without noticing his wife by the fireplace. "Why are you so shy?" mother asks naively, and cheerfully as she is starts humming a well-known lullaby: "doi doi doi doie baba". And when Kalani gets up to go out for a walk, she does so accompanied by drum music from the trance dance sequences of the yak tovils. In order to comfort Chandra, who is left in the kitchen with his mum, staring sorrowfully into the flames of the stove, Mother says she thinks Kalani just went out to vomit.

• In the next scene Chandra enters the kitchen where Sudjiva is sitting on his knees cutting mangos. Chandra takes the mango out of his hand and they get into a fierce fight. Chandra knows.



• Ariyawathi, the head gossip of the village comes on a visit, enters, and chats on without stopping. Ariyawathi reveals that she knows about "Sudjiva's" thefts of mangos, and that he is hurting the animals. She worries that he one day will kill somebody, and she says he is flirting with the village girls. She advises Karuna to get him married. The mood of the conversation changes however when Ariyawathi starts questioning Karuna about the relationship between Chandra and Kalani. "Why did the couple wait for two years before they got pregnant? Did they really have to try for so long? Is Karuna not suspicious" ? The two women, who have been very dear friends up to now, get into a serious fight which ends

when Ariyawathi is chased out of the house and leaves with a threat of putting a spell on Karuna while reminding her that she knows a lot about the matter.

• Chandra and Karuna are alone in the kitchen, it is late evening, and Mother is giving Chandra a body massage. As we know, Karuna chased Ariyawathi out of the house that day, but still she worries that there could be truth in her friend's insinuations. She thus asks her son whether he is having sex with his wife while pregnant. Is he? And when he says that he is not she is surprised; does he not even try? He must promise to tell her if there is anything wrong.

• Kalani sits by the fireplace rolling her head as if possessed. In the shadows of the kitchen three masked characters enter the scene. They are the mimetic figures of Chandra, Kalani and Mother-in-Law. They dance a pantomimic drama in which Mother and Son in conspiracy put a spell on Kalani, after which Kalani gets into a fight with Karuna and is finally dragged away by the two of them.



• The tense situation between the two women in the house remains. Kalani flees the house as soon as she gets the chance and Karuna is wary. "Why is Kalani "running here and there? She takes a walk to the lake, goes out picking mangos from the neighbour's tree. From a low branch, ha? What is she running from? She is not much help in the house, no. When questioned about her behaviour, Kalani answers that she has to go out since she misses her husband. Her explanation does not reassure Karuna but just nurtures her fears: "Has "Kalu Kumarea" taken her daughter-in-law? Is she seeing another man" ?

• Finally Mother confronts Kalani, and out of hatred of Karuna, Kalani blurts out the truth. She confirms that she has a lover and that the child does not belong to Chandra but to someone else. When Chandra comes home, he therefore finds his mother and wife in a fierce fight and tries to stop them. However, when coming to the rescue he is overwhelmed by anguish himself and uncontrollably grabs his mother's neck and attempts to strangle her. Luckily for Karuna, Sudjiva walk in and saves his mother. Again the situation seems to calm down. Sudjiva walks Kalani out of the kitchen into the private chambers.

• There is a fire in a bedroom. We can hear fiery drumming and the screams of Karuna burning to death. Her friend Ariyawathi arrives and when she hears what has happened she sings out her sorrow in a heart rending and primitive way.

• Ariyawathi is in the kitchen with Kalani and Chandra. Sudjiva has disappeared. He has not been seen since the "bottle accident". Ariyawathi as the clever lady she is, thinks, walks and talks simultaneously. She is troubled by the suspicious circumstances connected with the tragic death of her friend. To her knowledge, Karuna has never been afraid of the dark, but this night she has, strangely enough, kept the oil lamp burning all through the night. Kalani listens to her talk while she tries to light the fire. However she fails in her attempt. Ariyawathi gives it a try as well, but it will not burn for her either and in fear she understands that this the work of spirits present due to the "accident". Kalani does not accept her supernatural explanation though. For her, the firewood just needs some kerosene oil to catch fire, but Ariyawathi will not listen to such rational explanations since who knows the signs of spiritual influence better than her? Her late brother who trained her in the subject was an acknowledged Kattadia (priest). The guest, who the hosts think is too worried, goes on talking, and after a while she lets slip that she knows about the violent fight last night: "A kerosene oil lamp accident! Kalani has brought a curse to the house, that is for sure". Chandra and Kalani finally get tired of her evil talk and chase her out of the house. But she has said that she knows. Kalani asks Chandra, "Did you do it for me? Would you have done it for me? I myself could never have done it." Chandra starts crying, they both leave the kitchen,

• Chandra returns with some rags of his mother's dress, which he wraps around his shoulders. Kalani enters, sees him and says that he had better go to sleep. But he replies that he cannot go to sleep since he has all these "bitches" in his head. "I cannot forget what I saw. I cannot. She was screaming, screaming and she would not stop. All that fire all over her body, her sheets, the smell of her burning. I could not stop it, I broke the pot, I do not know if I did it on purpose. I see it all in my head over and over, I hear her voice, I keep on hearing her screaming over and over again. She only wanted me to be happy. I see other terrible pictures also. Pictures of you, pictures of you and someone else. You have to tell me. Will you tell me? Who fucked you? Tell me, tell me…" Sudjiva enters the room and stops when seeing the couple. Kalani is embracing Chandra attempting to calm him down.

• The sound of the yak bere drum is again filling the air. Kalani hallucinates again; this time she sees her mimetic self, looking at her husband's doppelganger who is seated by the bed of her pretend Mother-in-law. He sits down and caresses his mother's hair and you hear the rustling sound of the foot bells of the "Yaka" accompanying the movement. As Chandra leaves Kalani enters the chamber and pours kerosene oil over the sleeping Karuna and throws a lit match on her.



• Sudjiva talks with Kalani who is seated, as usual by the fireplace. Kalani is now fully convinced that the demon "Kalu Kumarea" is the agent of her misdeeds and misfortune, and that she is cursed. As she says: "The curse came true. I am paying for my sins. I am paying for your sins. I am bleeding, my baby. The spirits and curse are true." Sudjiva resists, "There is not a curse, no one is cursed and as for the baby, we just can have another one."

But Kalani does not want to. “You do not know me Sudjiva. I threw away the drum of Chandra. I threw it into the lake. People who do things like that are not sane. I know that the whole thing happened because of me and it will follow me forever. It is like this dead baby.” Sudjiva says,” I will not let anyone hurt you. If anyone tries to hurt you I will take care of it”. “Your mother, she is gone”, says Kalani. Sudjiva replies “I have killed her Kalani. I killed her for you. No one can hurt me. No one can hurt you”. An accident is the explanation but no-one believes it. Kalani now understands the picture. Kalu Kumare has come to her in the disguise of Sudjiva; he is the real evil representative that has come into her life. She commands him to get out of the house and her life. Kalani empties the kerosene oil bottle over her own body and sets herself on fire. Chandra enters the kitchen.

The End

3.2.5 Afterword

I am sorry to say that this reconstruction of the play does not do justice to the hilarious intersections of clever punning and word games created for this truly tragic story. The characters of the play are a group of villagers imagined to be living in a remote area of in Sri Lanka. They are poorly dressed, poorly lodged, selfish, cruel, evil, gossiping folk having easy work tasks and duties in their lives, which gives them plenty of time to enjoy food, sex and social drama. They are mean and violent. The characters are in other words portrayed in a highly negative manner, and their appearance is therefore not particularly flattering for those who have been brought up in such a social environment and identify themselves with the setting. It is not easy to draw the line between a discriminating motif and a sympathetic joke, and is difficult to understand whether the audience are laughing at or with the characters of the play. The intellectual force of a comedy is nevertheless this: to bring about an awareness of one’s own perception of “the other”.

The fire scene had a tragic outcome, or did it? The end of the play is left open for our own interpretation. But if Karuna, the Mother, really died, who killed her? All the characters in the play are given a possible motive for killing her. In Sri Lanka, kerosene oil lamp accidents occasionally occur, each one accompanied by suspicions of murder, as it is an effective

means for killing off an enemy. Karuna herself was surely desperate because of the shame that her daughter-in-law "Kalani's" love affair had brought to her house. Chandra, the husband of Kalani, showed an "unhealthy" attachment to his mum who treated him like her husband. How come he married so late (in his thirties)? He hated her. And he almost strangled her in the fight that took place the evening before the "bottle accident". Kalani for her part loathed her mother-in-law intensely; "Karuna's" constant nagging about her lack of dowry, lack of skills, infertility, and evil influence had got to her, and Kalani gradually lost her self-esteem and her sanity. She believed that she had caused "Karuna's" death. Sudjiva had not shown himself since the accident. Ariyawathi, the scandalmonger claimed to be skilled in black magic and she was certainly very upset with Karuna in the scene where Karuna chased Ariyawathi out of her house. Ariyawathi in distress shouted back at her that she would do "guru kama", that she would put a spell on her. In the second version of the play Ariyawathi hints that she really did cast a spell after this vicious fight. We are led to believe that Sudjiva is the guilty person, and Kalani supports this interpretation, as it is her view that Sudjiva is an evil person, the evil spirit in her life. He is the "Kalu Kumarea", the seducer who has brought her bad luck and made her pregnant. To her it is "evil work" to want a man other than her husband, a force beyond her own agency, engaged by spiritual means. But she attempts suicide; is it because of her misery or does she regret murdering her mother-in-law? The mask dancers entering the stage in one of the last scenes nonetheless suggest that a woman, Ariyawathi instigated the chain of events.

3.2.6 Sinhalinglish

The play, "the Ritual" was created by the young and talented director Jehan Aloisius and his company Centre Stage Production. Centre Stage Production is a local "avant garde performance troupe" operating within an English-speaking international community and as such is detached from the Buddhist Sinhalese "traditional arts crowd" with whom "Tovil dance" was in my time of research most popular in Sri Lanka. In many ways the theatre operated in Appadurai's (1996) terminology, within a "diasporic scape". One evolving during colonial times and developing into a local community of people socialising "in between" the local colonial and the international scape. The theatre director and historian, and former head of the Arts Council, Michael Fernando (1999), has written that the independent theatre groups in the post colonial area developed with a difficult love and admiration for their lost

colonial rulers – and created a scenario for public discourse through social drama besides that of the state-driven cultural policy programs for the preservation and enhancement of Buddhist Sinhalese culture/arts. The ethnic religious divide in Sri Lanka is between the Sinhala Buddhists, the Tamil Hindus and Muslim Moors – as well as a small group of Christian Burghers of Dutch descent and the local "aboriginals", the Veddhas. Social distinctions are moreover made between different caste groups/clans living in particular areas of the island – and social classes. The cultural policy in Sri Lanka has, since 1956, worked for the engagement, preservation and promotion of the Sinhala language and Buddhist heritage, both tangible and intangible. As a direct policy result the majority of Sri Lankans do not know any other language than Sinhala, and the ethnic Buddhist Sinhalese who make up about 75% of the population are highly knowledgeable and skilled in traditional religious art practices such as "Tovil dance". This post colonial "diasporic" community in Sri Lanka is highly influential and forms a social circle with the educated upper middle class who use English as their social language (Jayawardena, 2000). This is a community who are skilled in art forms introduced by the colonial masters such as modern painting and sculpting, classical instruments and song techniques, Western literature and drama, but which have, according to Morten Olesen's (2009) study on the political discourses of this social network, a difficult relation to their "Western" loyalties and cultural capital. Drawing from Olesen's (2009) work I also understand this Sinhalinglish community of Colombo to be a mixed caste and ethnic religious community, and that they are a community constituted first and foremost by the social distinction of class.

Ranjini Obeyesekere, who is involved with the field of drama and literature in Sri Lanka as a researcher, writer, highly esteemed scholar, director and much more, sheds light by the following words on the wider history of the English/Western drama tradition in Sri Lanka, as she says that: "Under the Colonial British Administration, English had been made the official language of the country and the language of education in the privately run but state supported mission schools. English and European plays were also being performed in Colombo for small audiences constituted of members of the English speaking elites. The upper crust of colonial society that patronises English plays and the vast majority of Sinhala speakers that flocked to nurti performances (drama) existed in watertight compartments and neither the actors or audiences of one group had very much to do with the other – a

reflection of a larger reality in the country as a whole during the colonial period" (Ranjini Obeyesekere, 1999: 120). Today the crowd attracted to the English plays at the British Council and the Lionel Wendts theatre where "the Ritual" was produced the second time I viewed it, is according to Obeyesekere, still a small social circle of a bilingual and educated upper middle-class. "The Ritual" is a play written in Singhalinglish, and as such is the first play ever deliberately written for those with Singhalinglish as their mother tongue. As I will not address the importance of institutions for the development of drama and theatre in Sri Lanka here, but just refer to Ranjini Obeyesekere's (1999) highly informative work on the field, I will just mention that the director was educated at an English speaking college, and that his mother is a famous actress, so he was born with an interest in theatre and he has received training at the Royal Theatre Academy in Madras on a program funded by the British Council. The title of the play: "the Ritual" was chosen by the director with reference to the mask dance appearances from the "Tovil system" that are written into the play script. It is therefore our next endeavour to give a short introduction of the art form as it has developed within the aesthetic regime of "Tovil dance".

3.2.7 Koalam Influence

In her book "Sri Lankan Theater in a time of terror" Ranjini Obeyesekere (1999) addresses the work of independent theatre groups in Sri Lanka operating during the years of her fieldwork, in particular in the period of 1990 – 1992, but also provides a very detailed map of the development of theatre through history in Sri Lanka by looking into literary evidence and historical records of visiting and locally produced plays. She argues that the modern theatre has developed from two sources; one is the folk theatre tradition, which developed in continuation with the "Tovil system", and the other is the Indian dance/drama introduced by visiting troupes from north India in the late 19th century. In regard to the play "the Ritual" the director is explicitly influenced by the Koalam mask drama tradition. The Koalam theatre shares the dramaturgical pattern of the comedy drama in the Tovil rites such as the Daha-Ata Sanni act. According to Ranjini Obeyesekere, the: "Koalam plays were no more than a masquerade or motley collection of characters, dancing and miming in a circular arena... The masks stereotyped and caricatured village personages and authority figures, providing an additional level of satiric text to the comic miming... It is the satiric tradition that I see continuing through the ritual and the folk drama tradition into the biting socio-

political critique found in the modern Sinhala theatre" (Ranjini Obeyesekere, 1999: 98). In his work on the Origins of Yoga and Tantra, the anthropologist Geoffrey Samuels (2008) links the development of the mask dance tradition of South Asia to Buddhist Tantrism and its ritual practice of possession/spirit mediation and sacrifice where he finds the first evidence for the creation of the art form in the early medieval period in Nepal. Kapferer, in his 1997 book – The feast of the sorcerer – explores the link between the "Tovil system" and Buddhist Tantrism more explicitly. How mask dance was incorporated into the Tovil ritual system I cannot say, but at present the most common figures "appearing" in rituals number about 35 in total. Samuels notes that the: dangerousness, or perhaps one should say the "scariness" of these deities (portrayed by masked ritualists) is an important part of how they operate now and an important indication of how they operated in the past (2008: 317). This feature of mask dance is just as important in the Tovil rites as it was for the aesthetic/semantic role it managed to take in a contemporary play such as "the Ritual". The mask dance of the "Tovil system" developed during the colonial area into a form of folk theatre, Koalam, portraying known village characters, colonial personas and lower beings of the Buddhist pantheon. The folk theatre, Koalam, was developed by initiated ritual specialists from the traditional castes of dancers and drummers. In other words, the Aduras as an artistic ritual service caste community had still, in the pre independence years, a restricted birth right – "copy right" on the "Tovil dance" performances, and also on those performed for pure entertainment such as the Koalam theatre. This is quite different from the present situation where the dance form holds the status as the intellectual property of all ethnic Buddhist Sinhalese and is an important symbol of the state. To illustrate the importance of "Tovil dance" I mention that in the "victory day parade" in June 2009 – celebrating the governmental army's victory over the Tamil Tigers, LTTE, one could see among the army band, soldiers and tanks dancing "ves dancers" of the up-country style of the "Tovil dance" system and mask dancers of the low-country style parading in the streets. Contemporary "Tovil dance", is not just a language "for gods" for the pleasing and pleading with supernaturals in the religious ritual domain, it is a kinaesthetic language of the State, and "Tovil dance" as an aesthetic regime is the language of the Buddhist Sinhalese superiority.

3.2.8 On the Performance Elements

Unlike theatre, a curing rite deals with revelatory imageries, imageries that have the power to release mental stress and bodily tensions. However, this play did not, despite its title, search for ritual ends as such, but sought to disclose social processes engaging the demonic forces which the traditional healing rites have the power to cure. "The Ritual" drama about a housewife, her best friend, her two sons and her daughter-in-law is set in a typical kitchen of a poor village household. And as the narration of this social realistic situational comedy dealing with dowry stigmas, mother and son relationships, infidelity, power of village gossip and troubled selves goes on, they are eating, stealing mangos, making sambol paste, making tea and scraping coconuts. The art of cooking is the key metaphor of the aesthetical theory of Bharatamuni, and following him rasa (flavour) is the taste or feeling that evolves in the air between the performer and the audience through the series of expressions, or bhavas, performed by the actor. In "the ritual", cooking itself serves as the bhavas, the symbolic language through which the emotions of the characters come into being. In other words, this is not a drama whose language of signification is expressed through abstract symbolic movement patterns as traditional religious dance dramas are, but a drama that is performed in an explicit and colloquial manner.

The dramaturgical techniques of the play are inspired by two sources; the "Stanislavskyan method" which in short could be explained as a technique in which the actors themselves create the body language of their stage persona through free improvisation. The second method used is the mask dance technique of the Koalam tradition (of the "Tovil system"). Mask dance or dance in general is a visual manifestation of an auditory musical form. Schechner's article on Rasa Aesthetics (2001) clarifies the distinction between the dance/drama tradition inspired by the work of Bharatamuni and theatre. He states that the word theatre of the Greeks developed on the concepts of seeing and saying – the dance/drama of South Asia on the concept of tasting. The technology of gestures and expressions and its dialectical interrelation with the sentiment aroused in the spectator of the rasa aesthetics is an issue I address in depth in chapter 5. According to Schechner (2001) in regard to the acting techniques, the gestures and expressions are "artistically performed emotions, which comprise a distinct kind of behaviour (different, perhaps for each performance genre... These performed emotions are separate from the feelings, the

subjective experience of any given performer. Which is different from the method of Stanislavski where the acting expression is based on individual experience or locked up and only accessible by means of an emotional memory exercise or a private moment" (Ibid: 32). The very dramaturgical method of the "Tovil system" and the work of the Centre Stage Production are in other words developed through two different dramaturgical/cultural registers. The dramaturgical method of Aloysius choice is complex, and the storyline has a complex subtext where the meaning depends on the associative "imagery" of the spectator – and the performance of the play requires highly skilled actors for success. The phasing of the play moves quickly between desperate and tragic scenes to hilarious situations, and the contrasting moods make the tragic peaks of the play cunning, and this dramaturgical technique becomes the vital force of the performance.

The play had developed significantly from the first time I saw it performed to the next. Both the improvement of body language and the variation of mood expressed through voice, created the presentation of a more multi-faceted personality than the hard-core bitter person created in the first version of the play. Kalani, the wife of the drummer who is the son of Karuna, is a more difficult character to portray though, and at her first try the actor Anushka Perera did not manage to convey the "inner demons" of her character convincingly. This time she had done her study and instead of just sitting on the floor staring into the air or fire, her lunacy was also brought to the surface as in a scene where she sat behind the fireplace and rolled her head frantically. Having experienced a lot of "real" demon ridden patients at Tovil houses, however, her choice of body movements was not yet completely sound since the choice of bodily action patterns in a rite is made by the dancer curing the patient and not the patient being cured. Karuna is a difficult character to portray indeed, and to me it seems like what is lacking both in her lines and visual rendering is the sense of absurdity present in the insane.

When rehearsing the first version of "the Ritual" that I had the chance to see, Aloysius had little knowledge of the art form (personal conversation) and the integration between the pantomimic doppelganger of the characters and the actors playing their "real persona" was not coming through successfully. In a common mask dance piece of the Koalam drama, the dancer dances sequences of dance steps, which conclude with the performance of a series of

body postures reviling the spirit of the character exposed. However, in the British council version, the mask dancers were not trained in the "correct" way, and their movements did not (as they should have) correspond with the personality of the mask. However, the cast chosen for the dance acts in the second version viewed were trained in "Tovil dance" and managed therefore to give a captivating performance. The acts have improved both in figures and dramaturgic lines and now work smoothly as an integrated part of the play. Thus, in the last version seen of "the Ritual" an enchanting tension in the story emerged in situations where actors using performance elements from both dramaturgical techniques appeared simultaneously on stage. The degree of artistic freedom in Aloysius' integration of "Tovil dance" acts" was great as the character that appeared on the stage in the mask dance act was "Maroa Raksea", a demon of death, and not "Kalu Kumarea". However, "Maroa Raksea" in the play was portraying "Kalu Kumarea" as the latter has a sexual element in him and thus is of interest for the play.

3.2.9 Religious Ideographic Inspirations

The narrative of "the Ritual", or its ideography – plays on traditional female ideals: that a woman should have a high dowry, be pretty, have good health, be loving and caring, have children and should stay at home. Aloysius sees "Kalu Kumarea" and women's vulnerability towards this demon, particularly when they are alone – in public or at home – as an exercise in social control. "Kalu Kumare" is according to Aloysius; "the ravisher of young girls". The Lankan scholar and dancer Kotagoda16 writes that: "Neele madena "Kalu Kumarea" is the name of the spirit that appears in the dreams of women who are anxious for love but nonetheless in need of sexual satisfaction. Historic records tell that "Neele" was a giant working in the army of Gettebahurajo. This athletic giant appears in their dreams and gives them all the satisfaction that they should have got in the normal world. However, because of all this dreaming and too much of this kind of intercourse they become very lean, lose weight and eventually they can even die. And as general advice from the Aduras: if a girl is troubled by this spirit and seeks sexual pleasure alone at night, the parents must marry off the girl as quickly as possible. The director has made "Kalu Kumara" the demon lusting for

[16] For reasons beyond my control, I have lost control of the page numbers and books of references of the translations that I had made from Sinhala to English in Sri Lanka. The myths presented are basically from Kottagodas book, in Sinhala, on the Maha Kalu Kumare Samayama rite.

women, causing barrenness and miscarriage, a part of "Kalani's" fears – her imagination. While sitting by the fireplace, staring into the flames we see "Kalu Kumare", or as Aloysius says "Maroa" – the demon associated with death, lurking behind her as if casting a spell on her. The mask has a blue skin (which commonly symbolises the darkest black), staring eyes with a reddish eye contour, demon tusks, black hair, black body gear with a red cloth tied around his waist.

"Mohini", is in the play portrayed by the character Karuna the mother. "Mohini" is the female equivalent to "Kalu Kumarea", and wherever she finds young men, particularly those who are coming home late from work, she seduces them. In the Koalam plays one does not find "Mohini" portrayed, neither does she appear in the Tovil rites. But according to Aloysius, "Mohini" is a "busy demon", she is an urban character, quite a legend, and people still claim to encounter her around Colombo. In his description, "Mohini" has long hair, she dresses in white, either a sari or a dress, and she carries a child in her arms. You can see her around; in her mission of ravishing men she can be the woman standing alone somewhere. "Mohini" usually attracts motorcyclists and asks them for a ride, but that is in the Colombo area. Outside Colombo you see her leaning on a lamp post; she asks people for a ride, shows her attributes to the men, and seduces them. There are stories about her getting on a bike and disappearing, that her face changes and her hair strangles the man. But again, for Aloysius, "Mohini" is a creation of human imagination, and to him the proposed threat of "Mohini" is a way for the women to exercise social control over their men. The husband should come straight home after work, not run around or engage in infidelity.

I myself found the following story of origin of the "Mohini Yaksini": "According to the legend, King Vesamuni's daughter was living with her child. When "Mohini" was passing through the air she saw the child playing in the garden. Attracted by the sight of the boy she took him away. The mother searched everywhere for the boy. She looked among rocks and mountains, rivers and lakes but could not find her son. After further searching she found him hidden in the crevice of a rock. She split the rock and removed her son, cursing the kidnapper never to find a husband. Since that day "Mohini" has searched for a husband with all the magic at her command. She has raised desires in young men and continues to do so without being able to find a husband for herself. Thereafter "Mohini's" aid is sought by

magicians when making love charms to win the love of young men and youths." N. Wijesekera (1987; 55)17. I also discovered that according to Hindu mythology "Mohini" is a highly seductive avatar of Vishnu in the vaisnawa tradition. There are some charms available in Sri Lanka that break her "sexual interest" in her victims, but I do not know the details of these "cutting rites". However, I have noted down that one of my informants became captivated by her charm in his youth – she appeared unbelievably beautiful in his "wet dreams" – a condition perceived as unhealthy by his family so he had had a rite done that put an end to her "phantasmorgasmic" – intrusions in his dreams.

The mangos are important fertility symbols in Sri Lankan religion. In the play the mango pickle becomes, in Aloysius' thinking, the "dolla duka" (pregnancy craving) of Kalani. In the play there are also seasonal shifts by a few months and the mango is employed as a symbol of the shifting seasons and of the shifting relation between Kalani and the brothers. In one of the scenes the brothers are fighting over the mango. In the scene they actually fight over Kalani through the metaphor of the mango, but the quarrel is never articulated. In the religious sphere in Sri Lanka however, the mango as a symbol has more explicit sexual connotations. In the history of the goddess Uma (Paravati), the mother of Katarangama and Ganesha, she takes the form of a golden mango that here works as a symbol of "the forbidden fruit". In the Pattini Cult the mango is clearly a vaginal symbol. The golden mango, from which Pattini is born in one of her many births, is connected with her chastity ideals. The goddess Pattini is married, but the relationship is platonic and does not involve sex. (G. Obeyesekere, 1984: 4).

3.2.10 The Play; "the Ritual" – Cultural Continuation and Change

The aim of the director of the play "the ritual" is to contribute to the development of the Sinhalese theatre, and this mission is reflected by his choice of theme, traditional village setting, the way he brings in performance elements from the "Tovil system" into the play, but mainly by his original use of Sinhala English in the script by which the company initiated the development of a completely novel genre the Sinhalinglish theatre. This genre reaches out to the established anglophile theatre network, both Sri Lankan and the international

[17] I discovered that Wijesekera copied Wirtz (1955:105), more or less word for word

network of the company's key sponsor, the British Council. The fusion between the two aesthetic registers; the Stanislawskian acting method which the actors used when they improvised the body language and lines of their characters, and the Rasa Aesthetics that influenced mask dance acts of the "Tovil system", come out as clearly distinctive, yet still integrated elements in the performance. The Tovil "mask dance" acts take in performance on an illustrative function. The dance acts figure as subtext for the psychotic fantasies of the lead character Kalani, and as such, the godly empowerment of the event, through dance, is not a dimension of the play "the Ritual" and it is therefore not a ritual. The genre of the play does not transgress the basic conception of theatre as a text-based performance, as the mask dance acts are too few and short to be claimed to be the dominating performance element. The play is not a religious performance, but yet in the Sri Lankan context, the very choice of the inclusion of "Tovil dance" in the play script means the play continues in the tradition of Buddhist Sinhalese culture.

The characters in the play, are situated an imaginary creation of a social lifeworld of families who engage with the "Tovil system" professionally. However, it is not the work of the "drummer Chandra" as a ritualist that forms the core story line of the script. The theme of the play is developed from the everyday life in the kitchen, the social conditions of infidelity, guilt and domestic violence experienced by the characters, the emotional conflict between them, as well as the possible conflicts between a mother and a son, between brothers, between in laws, and between neighbours. The Ritual" is in other words a contemporary play that looks into the lifeworld of the people engaging with the "Tovil system" through the eyes of a director who has listened to the gossip of his family's servants, reads Freud and is interested in sexually motivated social conflicts and distressed states of being. Aloysius has also learned through his training in Western theatre that there are potentially positive psychosomatic effects of theatre in general and with the "Tovil system" as his resource base, even though he has never seen a rite nor met a patient (aturea) himself, he has created a plot where the social drama played out actualises a social situation and the subjective state associated with demonic agency (Yaksa dosa). In the view of the Aduras, I suggest, if one accepts the fictional narrative of the play as real, the "Tovil system" as a curing system is potentially put into motion at the moment where the storyline of "the Ritual" ends. In the Tovil rituals, the substantial interrelation between humans, the patient and the supernaturals

and the cosmography of their lifeworlds as well as the pollutive and transacting nature of their interrelationship are employed as the "meta narrative" for the performative actions. Comparably, the Ritual is a secular psycho/social drama. In fact the Aduras themselves are quite knowledgeable on the distinctiveness between psycho-somatic illnesses and the "dosa" caused by supernaturals. I repeat the fact mentioned above that the patients treated in the system do not refer to the demons troubling them in terms of the mask figurations that they know from the rites but suspect their presence due to sudden fears experienced in encounters with poltergeist phenomena and "ghostly beings", or that they have been at auspicious places at auspicious times etc. For instance one demon appears like a ghostly dog or a ghostly white cloth and another as two women covered in blood. In the rites, the demons are not represented in these figurations. The characters of the play are however "hunted" by the demons in the form of masked dancers – and as in the rites they come across as frightening. The knowledge of the cosmography of the "Tovil system" is, as we learned from the director's own comments, quite novel, and moreover his choice of metaphors such as the mango is included because of its common associations with pregnancy craving –"Kalani's" condition, and in order to bring about the dishonest aspects of the Sudjiva character, and does as such not play on the religious connotations it has in the "Pattini cult" as mentioned above, i.e. it is not concerned with prosperity, wealth and chastity ideals. His interest in the system is restricted to the "symbolic types" (in Handelman's terms 1990 (1998)) that the supernaturals represent. His artistic freedom makes it possible for instance for him to let Maroa – "the spirit of death", represent Kalu Kumare "the womaniser" in his play. In the "Tovil system", such confusion of iconic representation would not take place because of the ritual dangers attached.

There are, as I have demonstrated above, many more differences than similarities between a Tovil rite and the play, "the Ritual", in regard to their operational concepts and compositional form and this also counts for the pragmatic ends they set out to serve. In regard to the aesthetics of a Tovil rite in a play, a performance serves the rasa aesthetical goal of balancing the sentiments and pleasing the mind. As a theatre play, the aim of this particular cultural performance was to entertain the audience. Ranciere takes, as I mentioned in the introduction, the ontological position that "the social" develops from a shared mode of being. Moreover, drawing on Fisher Lichte (2005) I claim that through the power of

embodied aesthetic experience cultural performances efficiently engage a sense of communal union in historical periods of communal disintegration and social changes. If I am to single out one dimension of the play which stands in a homogenous relation to or in continuity with the lived in realities of the audience, I will therefore suggest that it is the violent sentiment of the play. The violent theme of the play is, as I mentioned in the introduction chapter, quite common in contemporary theatre in Sri Lanka, and the popularity of these plays underlines in my view the importance of the dominating sensibility of a community in the creation of the aesthetic works of their culture. The tolerance shown by the audience towards the violence enacted on the actors on stage indicates to me the degree to which violence is accepted socially and played out in the everyday world. What the play showed more than anything else, is that there is a clear cultural/religious distinction between the English-speaking audience present and the rural communities in the centre of the "Tovil system", as demonstrated clearly by the distanced and stereotyped portrayal of the village characters in the script. In regard to the aim of the director to develop the "Koalam" folk theatre – his satiric choice is solidly grounded in the Sinhalese drama tradition.

3.3 Concluding Remarks

"Tovil dance" as an art form, an aesthetic regime, was written into the play script of "the Ritual" due to its popularity and its position in Sri Lankan society as a cultural heritage of the Buddhist Sinhalese, but also because it is a distinguished and interesting "aesthetic regime" to explore for an artist. As shown, the Ritual is a composition drawing on a great range of concept metaphors and two distinctive aesthetic registers and by doing so the company fuses the borders between Western and Asian ideography as well as religious and psycho-social performances. Fischer-Lichte claims that theatre originates from the social/cultural/religious practice of sacrifice, and as such "the Ritual" is just another theatre play that has developed from the practice of "sacrifice". The categories of Cultural Performances developed by Catherine Bell above, and her emphasis on the concept of concept, will be a guide to the presentation and analysis of the performance cases to be presented in the rest of this thesis. First comes the ancient healing ritual of the "Tovil system", the Rata Yakuma. Due to its concepts of creation, dramaturgical techniques and storyline, the rite invites an analysis of the aesthetic aspect of cultural performances. The storyline of the Rata Yakuma rite is the re-

enactment of the fertile powers created through the great sacrifice made by the seven infertile princesses to Lord Buddha. The Rata Yakuma rite is a ritual whose compositional elements positions go back through thousands of years of socio/religious history in Sri Lanka, and its latest invention made by my own informants is the elaborations on the comedy dialogue, the usage of women's clothes, and the inclusion of the Daha-ata Sanni in the morning watch in the ritual "Pella paliya" procedures. These elements have to my knowledge come into being in dialectics with the development of the contemporary cultural performances such as those exemplified above but also the vast number of traditional arts shows – Dahata-Sanni Sanskroti Sandarsena – performed by the initiated Aduras (Larsen 1998). In this rite an elaborate offering is included to Kalu Kumare, the demon hunting the lead character in "the Ritual". I will now turn to the Rata Yakuma ritual, its social, cultural and historical dimensions, aesthetic aspects and ritual procedures.

4 SITUATING THE RATA YAKUMA

4.1 Exploring the Mythology of the Riddi Princesses and their Curing Powers

4.1.1 Introductory Lines

The Rata Yakuma ritual effectuates cures and the safe delivery of children and is normally performed after the pregnant woman has passed the fifth or seventh month of pregnancy. The patients, or "atureas" of these rituals have often had problems conceiving, had miscarriages, or had health problems during the early phase of the pregnancy. The cause of their suffering has been proved through the diagnostic process of the Aduras to have supernatural agency. I myself lost my menses for more than three months while on fieldwork in 1996, due to the many nights awake at rituals I suppose, but the morning after a night awake watching one of the then rare Rata Yakuma performances I got it back. That it happened was not a surprise to the Aduras. They had performed a fertility rite. Nonetheless they found it puzzling that 10 years later, when conducting an interview on the Rata Yakuma rite, I openly told them so without being shy about it. To talk about these issues publicly, with men, is in other words socially tabooed. The situation for an infertile woman in Sri Lanka is highly risky. This is so because the family represents a person's social security system. For a woman, it is expected that it is one's husband and later one's children who will provide the basic personal protection and social security such as means for medical treatment, shelter, food and education. It is expected that a married woman will conceive healthy children and the family of the husband to be should always check the medical history of his prospects before making any commitments. In my experience, the only "condition" that is more heavily socially sanctioned than an unmarried woman locally, is a married woman without children. In one recorded case, a woman had gone to the extent that she had secretly given birth on behalf of her sister in order to "save" her barren sister from her misery. The Rata Yakuma and the cosmology employed in relation to the rite is in the "social world" a valuable means of relieving the patient from the public sanctions by attributing the agency of her misfortune to malevolent supernatural forces. In the "laukika" sphere of men and supernatural forces, such a condition is both caused by malevolent beings or can attract their attention (disti belma – pollutive glaze). The Rata Yakuma in performance is conceived as re-enacting the power given the Riddi Bishavas (Yaksinis) in order to cure women that fall

sick during pregnancy. Through the ritual procedures the patient is purified from "supernatural pollution" (pillu) caused by the pollutive glaze. The patient moreover carries out a "substitute" offering transaction with the supernatural forces involved in her misfortune, and as a result the Yakku are commanded to return to their lower realms of laukika and the cosmic balance is restored.

This chapter is an introduction to the descriptions of a Rata Yakuma ritual in chapter five. Religious Aesthetics according to Ranciere (2004), as addressed in the introduction, is distinct from other aesthetic regimes. A central element in religious aesthetics is that of origin and it is therefore essential to introduce the "upete kavi", the birth story of the Rata Yakuma rite. The myth describes the core of the ritual, the birth of the Riddi Bishawas, and the birth of the ritual as well as its ritual procedures and their origin. Moreover, I will look into the birth story of Kalu Kumare, the Yakku in the Buddhist pantheon who craves foetuses in particular. In the myth we learn about his un-noble birth, un-noble actions, his lack of control over his sexual body and his revengeful rebirth. Kalu Kumare is the demon troubling the woman (Kalani) in the play "the Ritual" as discussed in chapter 3. The Yakku always comes in crowds, but in relation with the Rata Yakuma cult Kalu Kumare has the strongest agency in the illness of the patient. My third ambition is to take a closer look into the cosmography of the Rata Yakuma ritual, and the many different stories of origin of the central supernatural forces involved in the rite; the Riddi queens. The investigation is done with the purpose of shedding light on some of the interesting elements that link the rite to many ancient religious cults in Sri Lanka as well as in India as well as to establish an understanding of the "Tovil system"'s historical and "hybrid" character. Moreover, a rite is performed for patients suffering from "disti roga" (except when performed for show of course), and some patient cases are therefore introduced below.

The Rata Yakuma rite is a continuation of many ancient "fertility cults" and during my research I became aware of the interconnection between the Rata Yakuma ritual and the ritual for the "Opening of the blossom" or "Big girl become". This is a common puberty rite that most women in Sri Lanka experience in one version or another. Kalu Kumare is central in the cosmography related to this ritual, and the illnesses of the patient in the Rata Yakuma ritual are often connected with the vulnerable pollutive state experienced in the time during

and days following their first period. I also discovered through my reading of the work of Nevill (1955) on the myths related with this "cult" an even more ancient version of the ritual cosmography of the Riddi Bishawas. It is possible that the Rata Yakuma is a Buddhist development from this cult predating even the Vedic period. My last ambition for this chapter is however to look into the puberty rite and establish its link with the "Tovil system". In the following I draw on the work of Nevill (1955) on the myths of the Buddhist pantheon in Sri Lanka, in addition to the complementary works of W.L. Hildburgh (1908), Deborah Winslow (1980), Paul Wirtz (1954) and Nur Yalman (1961) on the puberty cult as well as my translations of myths from Kotagoda's book on the Maha Kalu Kumare Samayama. In other words, this chapter does not concern "Tovil dance" as such, but sets out to position the Rata Yakuma in its social, historical and cosmo-geographic context.

4.1.2 The Story of Origin of the Rata Yakuma Rite

SONG OF BLESSING FOR THE RATA YAKUMA

In prosperous Sri Lanka
On the Rangiri mountain
On the top of the Sal tree
On the day Eswara was born
Seven persons were born
And the casket was displayed

On the day that Mahaswara was born
The casket was open
And seven were born

On the day that Satheswara was born
The casket was open
And seven were born

And on the day that Brahma was born
As before all the doors of the casket were open
And seven were born

On the day that Rough-sea was born
And as before the doors were open
And seven were born

On the day blood sea existed
The doors of the casket were open
And seven were born

Also on the day Dumb-sea was born
As usual the doors were open
And the casket was displayed
And seven were born

The day that the Blue-sea was born
The doors were open and the casket could be seen
As usual, seven were born

On the day that Seven-seas was born
The casket was displayed
And seven were born

On the day that Seven ponds was born
On the day that Seven vessels was born
On the day that Seven lakes was born
On the day that Golden Jar was born (Rankothale)
On the day the ceiling cloth was born (Uduvidiyene)
On the day the new flower lace was born (Nawa Male)
On the day the seven steps of the ranga mandale was born
On the day the seven pandals (torranas) (offering stands) were born
The casket was open and seven were born
Sapu, Dunnuke, Pethan, Pichcha and various Watu sudde flowers were there to decorate the bed,
and it was placed where the seven lights could cover the bed,

and at the same time the seven Bisaw came close to the flower bed (mal yahane)

The wind in seven days
The seven seas in seven days
The seven rocks in seven days
The seven ponds in seven days
The seven lakes in seven days
The rankothale, the golden jar, in seven days
The nawa male, new flower lace, in seven days
The uduviyan, ceiling cloth, in seven days
The seven pandals, torches, in seven days
All the offerings to you with nine hundred troupes of soldiers came to watch

After seven years
From the kethi makare, in the time of Sikuru
Making seven ships with various types of drums (bera)
And with Getabera, Ganabera and with the Suriyabera,
With bugles (trumpet),
With all these noises came to the land
Just then Pattini Devi with her power
These types of offerings, displayed and exhibited

Ninety-eight diseases and ninety-nine troubles and ailments
And thirty two disasters, plights etc to be eradicated and disappear is our aim
And we request babies, long life
And let thousand times of pleading be given
To live very happily
And to live with glory

The end

4.1.3 Queen Riddi

The seven princesses were born of air, they evolved out of the smoke of the casket at the top of the golden rock. At this auspicious moment a god was born; Eswara, Mahaswara, Satheswara and Brakma, four names of the creator of the Vedic universe. Moreover on this day rough sea, blood sea, dumb sea, blue sea and seven seas were born. Since they were born out of air they were in control of the elements, and had "erdi baliya" which is the power of travelling through air. Erdi Baliya is considered the most powerful mental capacity of a Buddhist Bodhisatwa. Queen Riddi is born with seven aspects, or she takes the form of seven princesses. Riddi and Erdi are used interchangeably in the texts as the name of the noble cluster of princesses. Whereas Erdi means air in Pali, and Iddhi power in Pali, Riddi means silver in Sinhala. In Sanskrit, Riddi is translated as prosperity. The story about Riddi Bishava that is narrated through the Rata Yakuma rite, does not provide much factual information about her life. It is mentioned that Riddi was a barren queen who came to Sri Lanka by sea. The name of the rite, Rata Yakuma, can be translated to mean the rite from the foreign country. According to the myths, Riddi Bishava settled down in Usangoda in the southern province. In order to beget children she created a white cloth that she offered to Buddha. In return for her boon she conceived children. I went to Usangoda with an Adura who showed me the dry barren stretch of land bordered by rough sea where the myth has it that the cotton used in the cloth offered to Buddha was grown. The earth is now reddish and barren as these cottonseeds were so powerful that they consumed all its fertility a long time ago.

Interestingly, the goddess Pattini is mentioned as a protector of the ritual. In Sri Lanka, Pattini is a smallpox expelling goddess, and is best known for her powers of curing plague and granting good harvests in the farming districts. Pattini is however also commonly known as a goddess of fertility. Newborn babies need her protection, and parents bring their newborns to one of her many shrines for blessings at as young an age as possible. Riddi does not have any status at any local shrine in Sri Lanka as she is too "impure" to be "domesticated" in this way. In contrast, Pattini, as one of the four guardian deities of the island, has plenty.

The myth has it that the Riddi queens had the power to cool the fire, (to control the female potency) of goddess Pattini. The fact that Riddi welcomed Pattini implies that a cult was already established for the Riddis before the cults of Pattini became integrated into the Buddhist pantheon. I have also noted that Riddi helped cure the queen Manikpala in the first curing rite created by the gods – the Kohombe Kankariya. Pattini, like Riddi, is a goddess associated with the powers of the "sallue", a white cloth. A white cloth is moreover an auspicious item in the local ancient puberty ritual, which I will return to below. The story of the origin of the white celestial cloth is different in the Pattini cult than in the cult of the Riddi Bishavas. However, in both cults the cloth is charged with the potency of Buddhism.

The cult of Kalu Kumare is also significant in relation to the rite as it is Kalu Kumare who causes the illnesses, which the Riddi Bishava has the power to cure. The Maha Kalu Kumare Samayama ritual (for women that fail to conceive) is one of the most elaborate rites of the "Tovil system", but a rite which today is very rare to see performed. My informants do not perform the rite at all. The cult of the Maha Kalu Kumare Samayama has many similarities with the Kohombe Kankariya cult in the "up-country", and Jayasena Kotagoda has argued that it evolved at a later period than the Kohombe rite as the pantheon of the ritual is of a later date. In the Rata Yakuma rite, the cult of Kalu Kumarea (who has many different births in the Sri Lankan pantheon) and the Riddis are merged together.

Domestic rituals such as the house warming rite for new houses, or the rite for the seven milk mothers in relation to birth, and the purification ritual in relation to the first menses, form in my view, a ritual system of their own, and are perhaps as Nevill (1955) suggests a part of an ancient ritual cult whose priests were of the washermen's caste. A separate offering is made in the Rata Yakuma rite in honour of the Ratna Valli, the mythological queen of the washermen's caste who married Vidjaja, the mythological ancestor of the Sinhalese, as mentioned in the introduction.

Anyway, today the Rata Yakuma is a rite of the "Tovil system", which is carried out by Aduras in the southern region of Sri Lanka. The only connection that the washermen have with the rite is that they provide fresh white cloths for the ceremony. But as we shall see, the myth of the origin of the puberty rite links Queen Riddi to the washermen's caste.

Washerwomen are in fact nicknamed Riddi, as they traditionally received a silver coin in return for their favours. Moreover, the story of the origin of "Neele Kalu Kumare" tells that his mother was of the washermen's caste as well.

The relationship between Riddi Bishava and Brakma, who in our myth are born on the same day, is elaborated by Raghavan in this way: "The chief character in this dance is queen Riddi, born out of a fire that arose on the Maha Meru mountain. Maha Brahma, who sojourned on earth at the time, took her as his wife. She begot seven daughters, Na Mal Kumari, So Mal Kumari, Idda Mal Kumari, Picheche Mal Mal Kumari, Sapumal Kumari, Vadamal Kumari and Siddi Mal Kumari. Later Maha Brahma deserted queen Riddi and she went to King Vesamuni with her daughters. He imprisoned queen Riddi and her daughters at Asuragiri Kotuwa for a period of twelve years. As they had no food during this period they had to find a way to live. Legend has it that they cultivated a new field with cotton and spun thread and wove it into a robe which they offered to Buddha Dipankara from whom they derived their authority to cure the ailments of barren and pregnant women" (Raghavan, 1967: 262). Maha Brahma is one of three omnipotent gods of the Vedic Hindu pantheon and as his wife, Riddi must once have been regarded as a powerful goddess. King Vesamuni is the mythological chief of the Yakku in the Lankan Buddhist pantheon.

Searching the internet for information on Riddi, I found information on a coin from the Kushana Dynasty of North India of about 100 A.D. portraying the goddess. Riddi, it turned out, is a goddess of fortune of the Purana tradition. Investigating the mythology of the Riddi of the Purana tradition a little further I found that she is interrelated with a god of wealth, Kuvara, of whom she was the wife according to the Mahabaratha epos. Kuvara is a Yaksha who holds authority of jurisdiction in the northern territory of the divine cosmos, and "When Brahma appointed him God of Riches, he gave him Lanka (Ceylon) as his capital". (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kubera). In Sri Lanka, Kubera are known as Vesamuni, and are the chiefs of the Yakku – the demons of the "Tovil system". The Riddi Bishawas are seven in number, as are the Sapta-Matrikas, the seven mother goddesses of the Purana tradition. In the Telegu iconography of the seven goddesses, they are always portrayed with Kuvera on one side, and Ganesha on the other. Both Ganesha and Kuvera are androgyne types. Riddi are in this tradition one of two consorts of Ganesha, the other one being Siddhi.

Kuvera and Ganesha are the sons of Brahma. How this family tree in "reality" was formed is uncertain for me. What I do find informing though, apart from how the "great tradition" of Asia through the centuries has formed the basis for many religious cults, is the indication found that the Riddi princesses had their "idols" in the cult of the Sapta-matrika tradition of South Asia. These seven mother goddesses were evidently worshipped in the Vedic period, and cults in their honour are widespread. In the Purana texts their names indicate that they are the female aspect of seven great gods – Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Indra etc. In the Mahabarata it is told that they "adopt" Skanda as their son. Skanda, or Katarangama is an important god in Sri Lanka but is not given any important status in the Rata Yakuma rite. I have not yet found any other interrelation between the godly mothers of the Purana tradition, the Sapta-Matrikas, and the Riddi Bishawas, other than that they are seven and barren. Riddi in this tradition was one and the goddess of fortune, but as a wife of Kuvera – or Vesamuni, Riddi are linked with the pantheon of the "Tovil system".

Kotagoda mentions a version of Riddi Bishava's birth story in his book on the Maha Kalu Kumare Samayama ritual. In this myth Riddi is born in Villodi in India and married with Kalu Maha Raju. The king goes to war and tells his wives that if his ship returns with a black flag he has lost (has died) but a white flag will indicate victory (he is alive). For fun he returns with a black flag hoisted, and in grief the queens jumps into the water and drown. On seeing his loving queens disappearing into the water he jumps after them and dies. The Riddis are reborn as Roddikulle, as women of the rodiya caste (washermen's caste) and the king as Kalu Kumarea. However, to me it seems that the myths about the Riddi Bishavas and Ratna Valli (a demi-goddess who is also worshipped in this rite) have been mixed up in this story.

Riddi is, in other words, both the name of a woman from the washermen's caste and a demi-goddess/yaksini. Riddi "embodies" the highest Buddhist mental achievement. She has the power to control the element of air and she controls the "fertile" element fire. She is more than anything else the manifestation of prosperity. Riddi is moreover a goddess of fortune of the Vedic tradition, and thus very ancient in the South Asian religious pantheon. In relation to the myth of the origin of Riddi and her consort in the puberty cult, Nur Yalman (1961) even suggests that the worship of Riddi predates the Vedic period. In the "Tovil system", the myth has it that the cloth Riddi created as an offering to Buddha was accepted and that

she in return received the power to cure ailments connected with conception and delivery of newborn babies. Another myth has it that she herself was barren but was blessed with children after presenting the white cloth to Buddha. Both "powers" are "re-enacted" in the Rata Yakuma ritual and either way the white cloth is charged with the powers of Buddhism. I do not have clear evidence for this and I am not an Indologist, but based on what I know I would suggest that the Riddi are both the goddess of fortune and the Sapta Matrikas, godly mothers of the Purana tradition. The features of these goddesses have been fused in the present version of the ritual mythology.

4.1.4 A Summary of the Ritual Procedures of the Rata Yakuma Rite

In short the rite starts out as the other Tovil rituals do, at an auspicious astrological time; subbe nakata. After addressing the gods, Suniyam and the leader of all yakas; Vesamuni, and the four guardian deities: Pattini, Saman, Nathan and Vishnu are summoned for personal protection of the Aduras and of the patient as well as of the audience. Throughout the night the leading ritualist pleads and treats the cluster of demons causing the patient her trouble, and they are asked in return for the offerings to give up their influence, to leave, and to never return again. In the Rata Yakuma rite the main offering sequence, the Maha Samayama (midnight watch) is dedicated to the (seven) Riddi Bishava. It also removes the bodily obstacles caused through the substantial pollution illness (disti roga) given by various demons. In the version of the rite described to me by my "gurunanse" Somatilleka, and the version that I will present below; Suniyam, Riri Yaka and Bille Yaka are offered to as the followers of Kalu Yaka. In addition Kalu Kumarea is given a special treat during the Hende Samayama (evening watch). However, in one rite viewed, Mahasona replaced Bille Yaka in the evening watch pideni. However, in the depavila (the "pretend as if" human offering that encloses the evening watch) Bille Yaka, Suniyam and Riri Yaka were offered to. In the Maha Samayama, the princess is invited to come. She arrives. Then the Riddi is given 32 offerings (pella paliya) and when all is performed, the Riddi is asked to leave again. Included in this "pella paliya" offering procession are the offerings mentioned in the myth of origin of the ritual. Traditionally the rite was over after the enclosure offering of the Baliya, a clay image of Kalu Yaka, was made. But since the Daha Ata Sanni, the mask drama of the 18 Sanni demons, is hilarious and very popular, it is nowadays often played out in the morning watch for pure entertainment. In such instances the Baliya offering is done after this "act".

The theme of how Riddi Bishava dresses herself up, treats and is treated by her husband, how she weaves a mat, sows cottonseeds, harvests and spins cotton and weaves cloth, bathes and nurses her child is played out in the main sequence of the rite, the midnight watch or as the Aduras say, in the Rata Yakuma Samayama. In the myth of origin important features of the offerings are given that should be presented in the Rata Yakuma Samayama. Water should be offered from a pond and a lake to all seven princesses in an offering vessel. The elements; air, water, earth and fire were given material form for seven days by wind, seas, rocks, ponds, lakes and torches. These elemental things are offered to Riddi throughout the rite. The world of the gods is made of the same elements as the human world. Elemental representation in "cosmic design" (as in this tradition in geometrical yantra formations) creates a passage between every world within this world. The sound of the vasdanda (demonpipe), the smoke of the dumalla (resin), and the light of a torch effectively attract the attention of beings of all worlds in this world to the ritual arena. A golden jar (represented by the earthen pot – kotale), a ceiling cloth, a flower lace and seven dance steps should be offered at the seven offering stands. Descriptions are given of what kinds of flowers the Riddi Bishava should have presented at the offering stand placed in the centre – the mal yahan, flowerbed (in the vidiya – flower shed). Moreover we learn that the offering of seven torches should be given, so should sound offerings with drums and trumpets, the seven dance combinations. And after all this the patient should be released from her sufferings and ailments, should deliver her child successfully, live a long life, live happily and live with glory.

As with the other rituals of the Yak "Tovil system", there are inconsistent "traditions" of this rite which follow the territory of "cultural regions". But also the versions held as correct by the head Aduras of the rites operating within cultural regions are slightly different. In regard to the Rata Yakuma there are variations in the texts and the contents and dramaturgically creative ways of carrying out the offering themes of the 32 acts in the more or less "standardized" pelle paliya. One of the differences concerns whether a female hand puppet baby that collects money from the audience "appears" or not, (the doll nursed in the rite is always a boy child). The "baby puppet" act was recorded by the Seligmans as a part of the Vedda ritual tradition (in their unpublished diary), but of the connection with the puppet, the clans of the Aduras that perform this act, and the Vedda rites I am not certain. Another difference concerns the style in which the manifestation of the "warama", the "life force" of

Riddi Bishava is performed. As I have seen, sometimes the Adura receives the "warama" in his own body as he puts himself into a light trance by swaying his body back and forth with his hands placed steadily on the centre of the Riddi Yage vidiya (literary the street of the Queen Riddi), with his feet trembling as he inhales thick mantra-charmed dumalla (a kind of resin that is used only in the Tovils) smoke. Eventually when the "warama" is received, the Adura falls backwards on the ground and keeps that position until the Mantrachari has brought him safely "back" by sprinkling cooling charmed saffron water on his body. Another version is to sway the body and sweep the hair to the ground until the Adura falls back shivering – and also here the Adura is brought back by the sprinkling of charmed saffron water. Less dramatically however, another way to bring about Riddi's "warama" is through "bringing life" into the "kotele". The kotele is an earthenware pot with seven holes in it. In this offering act the Adura holds the pot in his hand and when the Riddi Bishava "warama" "enters", the pot starts to vibrate. Both acts bring about a symbolic (indexical) presence of the Bishavas at the rite to the spectators and prove that the Adura's pleadings to the Bishava to come to the vidiya through her disti belma (her look) have been successful. A third difference concerns the degree to which offerings to Kalu Kumare or Kalu Yaka, the womanizing demons are elaborated on in the rite.

The tools which the Aduras use in order to attract the spirits "disti belma" (her look) to the rite, are presented in detail in my thesis, (Larsen (1998). But most important are: the whistle sound of the demon pipe, the sound of the drum (of a particular type), the smell of incense (a particular sort), the lighting of a fire, and the attractive substances of the offerings. Throughout the night the Adura calls on, pleads with, and demands the Yakku to give up the patient – they are one by one invited, come, treated, and sent away. The design of the offering structures forms a mediating point, an axis mundi, between this world and the world of the spirits by imitating the cosmography and elements of their world. With the igaha (an arrow which has an iron spike in its end) the ritualist transfers the disti from the patient, to the offerings – the cock effigy and "binds" it to the ground or the offering baskets by drawing three lines on the ground, or by touching the offerings. Throughout the night, the patient is purified from disti with charmed saffron water, dumalla smoke, and betel leaves.

Commonly the rite is held after the 5^{th} month of pregnancy, but some say that one has to wait until the 7^{th} month. I have also heard that the rite should take place between the 5^{th} and 7^{th} months. In one case the rite was performed after a woman had given birth. The Adura performed a Hende Samayama, Rata Yakuma Samayama and Daha-ata Sanniya for her. The main offerings were for Kalu Kumara, Sanni Yaka, Suniyam and Riri Yaka. However, they did not offer the Kalu kumara baliya, neither did they perform the nanomorea – the bath act and the kotte – spinning of cotton and offering of cloth acts of the Rata Yakuma Samayama. This is the correct procedure for the rite when the child is already born I was told. It points to the pragmatic nature of the composition of the rite. In other words, the rites are put together in accordance with the particular health condition of the patient.

Today you find this rite performed in the Matara district. There are rites performed in the Bentara region as well, but I have not studied these and do not know if or how these rituals differ from those that I studied, nor how often they are performed now. However in the Matara district, this rite is rarely performed. Nonetheless, after having spent about ten months in Sri Lanka in 2001 – 2002 I had the chance to attend only five Rata Yakuma rites; three rites were on the same weekend, one in Matara, one in Dondra and one in Weligama when I paid a short visit to the island in February 2006. The frequency of the rites, I suggest, is dependent on the general family economy because in 2001 – 2002 no less than two monsoons had failed and the fish stocks were low, while at the start of 2006 the many water tanks were full, and tsunami aid projects had significantly improved the general cash income for many. The number of fishing boats had doubled and the entire island was prospering. A rite such as this which requires work by four dancers, two drummers, a Mantrachari and an assistant, and treats the gods and spirits as well as the relatives of the patient, her neighbours and friends cost about 25,000 RS to host in 2006, or about 250 $.

4.2 The Mythology of the Black Prince

4.2.1 Neele Kalu Kumare

Neele Kalu Kumare is a demon that causes miscarriages and barrenness. Neele is a giant born out of wedlock, his mother is the illegal wife of his kingly father, a woman of the

washer caste. The washerwomen play a very important role in the local puberty rites and as these women are close to young women in their most extreme pollutive state they are considered to be highly pollutive themselves. The ancient local social rank system follows notions of ritual purity and in this system the washer-caste rank the lowest in the category of service castes. Neele thus had a "polluted" birth. Neele the giant was physically strong but had an unbridled lust for women, of whatever age or form. According to Buddhism, to control all bodily desires is an ideal. The high sexual appeal of Kalu Kumare, eventually became his undoing as his life force was dried up when thousands of women madly sought sexual pleasure from his body. The prince died and was reborn again as Kalu Kumare, a yaka seeking revenge for his death from all women by causing misconceptions. According to the myth of origin that I found in Kotagodas book on the Maha Kalu Kumare Samayama rite, a ritual for barren women, the birth of Neele Kalu Kumare goes like this:

In Kandy a king called Puotelle had a queen called Muttemalea. Muttemalea was barren. Because of this sad situation the king kept a washerwoman as his illegal wife, and she gave birth to a child called Neele. One evening the king came home and saw that his Yagadawa (a heavy object) had been turned upside down, and he was inquisitive about how it could have happened. Who had lifted its? Who was strong enough? As the story goes; one day when Neele came with his mother to the palace, he had lifted the Yagadawa, looked at it and replaced it upside down, and this was what the king had noticed. The king found out that it might have been Neele, but as he could not believe that his son possessed such strength he invited him to the palace to test his abilities. Neele came and the king asked him to take the Yagadawa and hand it over to him. Without knowing about its huge weight, Neele just lifted it and gave it to the King.

The story moreover tells how Neele went with 24000 "prisoners" out of Lanka. And:

Very often being with women you lost yourself
and you are cheating these Yak Aduras
And you are always there and the disaster happened to this Kalu Kumarea

And it always comes and ruins the children
And it is the birth of Gadjba Kalu Kumarea
Please come and cure the diseases

You are the son of the illegal wife of the Gadjeba
And you have become a giant
And if you are in the neighbourhood
Please come and help us to get rid of these diseases

The women's sexual feelings
It is the women who convince the men to be with them
The women in this town are not spoken to by men
So when they hear a word from somebody they want to live with them
And they have very keen sharp eyes and they play with their breasts and walk
These uneducated ladies come and embrace the king
So the ladies do not think of their age
They are impatient and they come and fight to get hold of this man, Neele

They say that they come around this Neele and start licking him
Because of this some of these women become angry
And so they come to try to sleep with Neele
They tried all the techniques possible to make him sleep with them
Consequently he died and was reborn again

From that day, from that time, from the revenge that he took
He gave power to Vesamuni,
And from that annan (order) you travel here and there in Sri Lanka
When the women see you somewhere here and there
Some different diseases will occur

In order examine the social context and situations where demons like Kalu Kumarea have caused maladies which Riddi Bishava have the power to cure, I will now turn to a local case.

4.3 Cases of Illness and the Diagnostic Process

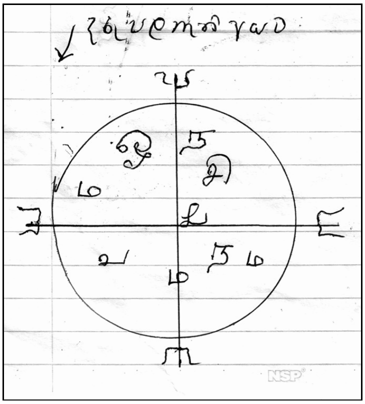
4.3.1 The Case of "MotherMy"

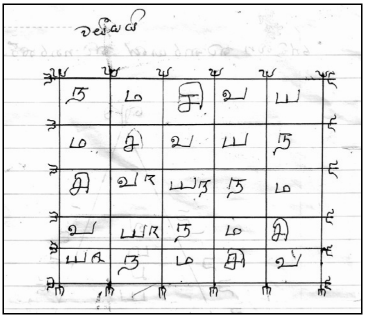
"In the beginning of our marriage, during the time of my first pregnancy, me and Husband still lived in the house of Father. It was much later that I started up the shop and built this fine house across the road for my husband, our seven children and me. Almost everybody living in this part of the town belongs to the fishermen's caste, and moreover most inhabitants are descended from the same lineage. It is common that men after marriage move into the house of their wife's family, or make a new home close to it. During most of my pregnancy I was in good health, but on reaching the last month, the time that I should deliver the baby, I suddenly fell sick. My body became abnormally swollen, I lost feeling in my cheeks which hindered me from talking, and I "pissuewella", I lost my mind. At this time Father owned a fishing boat together with a friend. One day, however, for some reason I cannot recall, Father and Partner had a serious fight that led to the end of their co-operation. My father took over the boat and the crew and from then on he ran the business alone. It did therefore not come as a surprise to us that the Adura that we had sent for in order to find out what had caused my sudden illness, had a vision that black magic (koddivina) had been cast over our land. He could tell this through his reading of "andun" : a technique where one envisions the god Hanuman and what one seeks through burning a camphor or light on a beetle leaf. The Partner had been very angry with Father and in this way had taken his revenge.

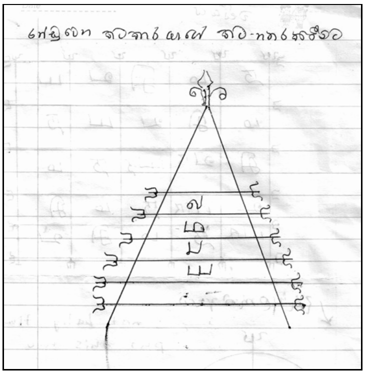
In this historical period, in the late fifties, the people living in my town were not as good Buddhists as they are today. That is to say, they did not follow the Dhammapada and observe the five or eight precepts and other good Buddhist actions. Instead there was an endless chain of Kodivina – sorcery going on between the houses. Every spell just prompted revenge through another and as a consequence there was rarely a night when you could not hear the drumming from a Tovil or Pideni as rituals for stopping malevolent spiritual influence were performed. She continued and told me that the priest had asked MotherMy while unconscious what the agent of her suffering was and she had written down the names of: Riri Yaka and Kalu Kumarea. He then tied a thread (epanula) around her neck, and it had an immediate curative effect. Some days later she gave birth to her eldest daughter. The

Adura had performed some counter magic on their land, but she was not fully cured. A few weeks after the delivery she was lovingly nursing Daughter when Husband came home. However, when he came up to them he realised that she was not breastfeeding Daughter at all, but that she was about to strangle the baby. She cannot remember any of this happening; she had gone mad – "*pissue wella*". The Adura was sent for again, and because of the urgency of the situation (it was obvious that Kalu Kumarea, the spirit who craved newborn children, was a threat to Daughter and that he was using her as his agent) a grand Tovil was held throughout the following day and night. From the ritual itself she remember an Adura running around and falling with fire in his mouth and bathing and nursing his child as the Riddi Yaka. She also remembered that the Daha-ata Sannis with nice masks was performed in the morning. From this it is reasonable to presume that the rituals done were an Ira Modum Samayama and a Rata Yakuma, rites often performed together because in the local cosmology Riri Yaka is a close follower of Kalu Yaka and Kalu Kumare. After this ritual, everything was ok. She gave birth to six other children without any complications.

However, the demons did not leave MotherMy in peace for good. A magical spell will in many cases have unlimited potency. Thus her story continued with: "Do you remember the other day when the Nona who reads slokas (ritual purifying verses in Sanskrit) visited our house? I remembered that a woman came and heated betel leaves with lime over a small oil lamp, squeezed lime on them and rubbed the leaves into the hair of MotherMy and held the leaves up to her forehead while reciting a good sloka about Mahasona. You asked me what she was here for. I could not answer then, but as you know, I had been sick during the last week with a terrible headache. I had lost my appetite and I was feeling weak. The reason I had sent for Nona in this matter was that my sickness occurred after I paid a visit at night to the family who lived in Father's old house. On my way home from their house something happened and I "Bayawella" – I felt sudden fear. When I was about to cross the main road I heard a motorbike coming up and passing behind me, but in reality there was no bike passing by to see. After having the slokas read I regained my bodily strength, so it must have been Mahasona – the cemetery demon – that I had heard passing that night. After this event will I never visit Father's old place again; the "kodivina" (black magic) done to that land in the past, has proved that it is still potent."







Yantra/Mantra Charms given to me by the (late) husband of MotherMy, the Buddhist monk and Charmer.
The charms have the power to help women to conceive, to prevent miscarriages, and secure a safe delivery.

4.3.2 Diagnosis

The patient involved in the rite which I have documented below was a young woman in her late twenties living in Wilpitte in the southern region of Sri Lanka. After finishing her A-level exams, a task many found difficult, she did a University degree in Sociology. She passed with outstanding results and at her graduation she was awarded a grant to go to Norway to do a master's degree at NTNU in Trondheim. However, she got married and due to various circumstances she ended up prioritising her home affairs in Wilpitte town instead of going to Norway. The patient was influenced by the disti (pollutive substance) of Sanniya Kalu Kumarea: a spirit that craves foetuses and causes miscarriages (gassewime), and her story was as follows. The patient had problems conceiving a child after marriage, and in order to deal with her misery she went to the rock temple Viddiye Kande of the demi-god Viddiye Bandara located close to Kaluttara and Alutgama town. At this sacred place of worship she made a vow, like many other Lankans in a similar situation. Her pleading was heard – and as a result she conceived. However, the story did not end happily here, there were more obstacles to conquer, and before passing the third month of pregnancy she had an abortion. This time Patient called for an Adura for consultation. According to the descriptions given in mantras, the Adura prepares the "diagnostic" rice-pot. When the pot is correctly done, they investigate the pot for signs of dosa (illness). If dosa is caused by disti of Kalu Kumarea there is a dark shade in the rice, and moreover, in the centre of the pot a small golden coloured hole appears. Reading these signs in the rice, the Adura therefore tied the epanula, the protective thread binding the force of spirit's disti, around her upper arm and neck. The Adura gave her charmed coriander extract and a tambili coconut to drink. The curing methods of the Adura proved effective and some months later she again conceived a child. In return for the Sanni Kalu Kurmarea's "retreat" Patient had vowed to make a grand offering ritual for him near to her delivery. She promised both the Kalu Kumarea as well as his followers a full treat of offerings in exchange for her own "bodily substance".

Amarasingham Rodes (1984) wrote about the importance of the diagnosis process in relation to the curing process where she argues that the interrelation between the two is the predisposition for an efficient cure. In our case, the time for the Rata Yakuma rite had come. Patient had passed the crucial fifth month of pregnancy successfully and had to fulfil her vow to the supernaturals. She had to perform the grand offering rites Ira Modum Samayama

and Rata Yakuma as promised. If she did not, she could put at risk the life of herself as well as that of her yet unborn baby. In this presentation of her "cure", I will move directly to the Rata Yakuma rite which is performed from dusk to dawn, and refer the interested reader to David Scott's (1994) work for an elaborate presentation of the Ira Modum Samayama.

In a comparative case, the girl was pregnant in her seventh month and until then she had gone through her pregnancy without any complications. One day at the beach however two children from her village were caught by an underwater current and drowned while she looked on helplessly. At this moment she became afraid (bayawela) and in the night her body became swollen. Her condition did not improve, and after some days she sent for an Adura living in the neighbouring village for help. The Adura came and made the diagnosis (epa nula bandimu), her condition improved slightly and after three weeks they made a Rata Yakuma for her. In the rite, offerings were made for Suniyam, Kalu Yaka, Riri yaka and Mahasona, Kalu Kumarea and Bille Yaka, and the main offerings were made to the seven queens: the Riddi Bishavas. The woman showed me when I met her at the rite that her legs were still swollen but she was much better now than in the first days after the incident. Some days later I met one of the sisters of the patient on the way to church (in other words she was a Christian). When I asked about her sister's condition she smiled and said that she was now back in good health.

4.4 Female Puberty and its Connection with the Rata Yakuma Ritual

4.4.1 The Story of the Origin of the Puberty Rite

The diagnosis process brought Patient's memory back to the auspicious moment of her first menstruation. In Sri Lanka this is a period of life when women are subjected to the greatest danger from malevolent spirits as they are heavily charged with "killi" – substantial pollution that is craved by Yakku. In this period of life every Lankan woman goes through a "rite of passage" in one way or another, which protects her and her neighbours, rites that demarcate the bodily and social transformation of the person from a girl to a woman. The rite has many names, and those my informants used were: the Kottehalu mangalle (the cloth wedding), or Weddiwiyete peminime (mature to come). On this Nevill writes: "The ceremony takes its

name of the Kotahalu, from Kota, new in Telegu and salu or halu, a cloth. The Telegu word is spelled out as Keoti, but the ti is hardly sounded at all in the Sinhalese word and has quite dropped out. The festival is therefore that of the new cloth" (Nevill 1955: PP 552, OR.6615 (413), the purification prayer). According to Wirz: "The appearance of menstruation is always the cause for a particular ceremony, called lokuna (grown up) or mal-varauna (opening blossom). In the district of Colombo the expression kotoluna is generally used, which means the same as lokuna" (Wirz, 1954: 243)

The mythological origin of the ritual are given in Nevill's collection on the "Kotahalu Yadinna", (Ibid., 1955: 552, OR.6615 (413)).

It commences with an account of the destruction of the previous Kalpa by rain, and the subsequent floods. When the flood abated the Bambas descended, and ate the mud which at first was eatable and nutritious. As this disappeared, wild rice grew up, and then men began to divide into clans and falsehood grew rife in the land. Viskam deva made a crown of flowers, and a Bodhisat prince was crowned by him, and is known as Mahasammata. Umayangana attained the full age, and the king caused a golden basin to be brought, and her cloth was washed in it. A separate hut was decorated and put up for her, and a master washer performed the ceremony (then follows a list of textiles, paddy, cereals and sweet meats.) A washerwoman assisted and a great festival was held. Nila, a warrior or Yaodaya, fetched a new cloth for the queen. Offerings were made to Gara Yakan. The washerwoman conducted the queen to the palace by its northern door, and the cloth which was washed in the golden basin, was shown to the queen, who gave the washerwoman great gifts.

When she reached puberty, the queen of the first king Maha Samata had a "menses hut" put up for her. This is a custom that my informants told me continued in some villages up to the last century. The meta-narrative of the story is the story of the origin of the first king and his relatives, a story which is central in the sorcery rite Suniyama of the "Tovil system". Moreover it describes the origin of the Bambas and Suras, two supra-mundane clans, and their habitat. To put on fresh clothes is important in all the "rite of passage" ceremonies of Lankans. The clothes do not have to be new, but clean, and traditionally they are to be provided by people from the washermen's caste. The procedure described, with the isolation of the woman, washing of her clothes, that the rite is performed by the washermen's caste, that the woman is dressed up in "auspicious clothes" after her isolation, and that food is

offered (pudja) etc. correlates to the puberty rite I myself got the chance to observe and whose procedures are given in detail below. In the next section of the myth, which has 137 verses Nevill says that the pantheon is described from the viewpoint of the first king, Mahasammata and his wife Uma, or Manikpala as she is also named. Otherwise the story has many similarities to the Christian myth of creation.

The myth he has collected relates to the BAdura kalpe or Bhadra kalpa, which is thought to have been about 18 yugas ago. In the Avu-atta-yuga the world was destroyed, and the Devas, knowing that the world would be flooded with water, left for the Bamba region. The sakvalas (worlds) were wrapped in darkness, and for seven days rain fell without ceasing. On the first day rain fell as fine as needles, on the last day as thick as palm trunks. In seven days the rain of seven hundred years fell, and water covered the face of the world, and overflowed as far as the face of the Bamba region. Upaulvan deva dived into the water, from which a lotus blossomed with two Bambas in it. When the earth appeared, the Bambas came out upon it and fed upon the tasty mud. For sixty thousand years they thus lived, and then the Devas created plants, and trees and fungi of excellent flavour, grew out of the earth. The kalpa tree also appeared, and sayan-jata, or spontaneous rice. The sun appeared, Mahasammata was born and crowned as king. Isuru and Ma Devi then existed, and Saraswvati and Uma angana were their daughters. Nila devi, their son, was born from blood.

Uma reaches puberty and her brother, Nila Deva sets out for the Bamba region for a celestial cloth and comes back with the cloth and his wife to be Riddi. In other words, in this myth Riddi is not the wife of Brakma, but of Nila Deva.

When Uma agana was seven years old, and Sarasvati still younger, she asked her mother for a celestial robe. Her mother informed Isuru of this. Nila deva was then ordered to go to the Bamba region, and fetch a cloth for his younger sister. He did so, taking a sword in his right hand, and an iron mace in his left, and adorned like a Yamaya. He departed with a shout and filled the Bamba and Deva worlds, and caused the Bambas and Devas to tremble and weep. The Bamba king, knowing the cause, sent a devangana, or celestial maiden, with a celestial cloth, both of which Nila deva took back with him. The cloth was sixty cubits long, and dividing it into two, the two younger sisters robed themselves in it. He himself married the devangana or goddess, who was known as Ridi, or silver.

On the seventh day after Uma agana was robed, she was married to her father Isuru. Subsequently, when she attained the full age of maidenhood, an astrologer told Nila deva how she should be purified. His sister asked him to get her robe washed for her, and Nila deva washed it in the Anotta lake. A Rakusa living there concealed himself in a rock on which the robe was to be kneaded to wash it. There was a long altercation between these two, at the end of which Nila deva struck the water with his mace, driving away so much of the water that fish were left on dry land, and the Rakusa trembled with fear. While spread out to dry the robe disappeared, and Nila began to weep. Sura raja then appeared in the skies, and told Nila to sprinkle the rock with water. He did so, and the cloth which had dried over the rock so finely as to become invisible, when saturated with water, again became visible. He then placed it in a casket, and took it home, authorizing the Rakusa to receive offerings when maidens attained full age and were purified. From the time of his marriage with Ridi, their descendants were to remain a distinct race [18].

Nevill suggests that the pantheon of the Bambas and Suras were distinct clans, and that the gods of the pantheon were headed by Nila devi (Vishnu), Sarasvatik and Uma agana. This trinity, Nevill argues, predates the later Brahmanic myths of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Nila Devi's wife Riddi is thus Lakshmi in a subordinate form, and she is Sarasvati in her chief form and Sarasvati is the wife of Brahma which again confirms Yalman's evidence that Riddi was the wife of Brahma. Nevill moreover concludes that the washer caste were once priests who retained their sacerdotal function only in domestic ceremonies. In other words, the myth of origin of the puberty ritual indicates that there is not just one religious cult, but many which have inspired the present form, procedures and contents of the rite, and that the washermen's caste held in the past, as today, an important position in rituals concerning human reproduction affairs. Moreover, the Rata Yakuma is a Buddhist ritual, and the Riddi Bishawas are manifestations of the highest powers of the next Buddha to be. It is therefore plausible to think that the ritual in its present form is a development of the former cults of the Riddi queens.

[18] Another name for the washermen's caste is hena or hina – washermen working for the Salagama clans.

4.4.2 The "Big Girl Become" Ceremony

Born on Christmas day in 1992, Krishna was her obvious name. Eleven years later a crowd of relatives, including friends and those living far away gathered at her family's house. It was on the day of her auspicious transition ritual – her "Big Girl Become Ceremony" [19].



Krishna is waiting for the astrologically fortunate moment to greet her parents as a mature woman

[19] *Loko lameyek wella* is the Sinhalese expression and translated into English it means; big child become. Since this ceremony is only performed for girls I have chosen to call the transition rite; "Big girl become ceremony" .

Program for the Big Girl Ceremony, Auspicious times given by the astrologer:

07:48: Facing the southern direction she should have a bath

0803: Facing the southern direction she should step into the house

0805: Tea is prepared for everyone

The colour she should wear is pink, and dressed in this colour she should worship her parents and relations. The first persons to be served a meal should be a businessman and his son.

1132: Lunchtime. Honoured guests should be served first

In the morning before the ceremony began at the "wedding house" (mandala geddere), which the locals entitle the hosting house, the parents of "the big girl to become" went to the temple and made a Buddha pudja. That is to say, they brought offerings to Buddha as well as to the important guardian deities of the island and in this way paid homage to the gods to hopefully receive their godly blessings in return. Moreover they served dane, an auspicious meal consisting of milk-rice, to the clergy of the temple. When they returned to the house, they paid similar acts of respect to the images of the guardian deities by putting some colourful flower-petals and fresh water on the shelf in front of the icons in the house-altar, and lit a small oil lamp.

Twenty-five days previously, Krishna had her first menses. When she discovered the condition she informed her mother, who immediately took her outside the house, and followed her into the garden. The present physical condition of Krishna was considered "highly polluting" and thus dangerous for the house and its people as this particular substance is considered infectious and attractive for malevolent spirits. Krishna had waited in the backyard, she said, for some hours until the Reddinenda had come and given her a purifying bath. Reddinenda is the colloquial name used to address a woman of the washermen's caste. Translated into English, reddi means clothes, whereas nenda is an

informal way to address an unknown woman of low social rank. The duty of the washermen's caste is to wash clothes both commonly as well as for ritual occasions. However, the ritual bath in this ceremony is of course just carried out by women and not men. Covered by a white "beach wrap" Krishna was asked to step onto a new hand woven mat made of plant fibre which the Reddinenda had brought along. The woman then took the water from a tub with a tray, poured the water over her head and cleansed her complete body from top to toe. The water had been mixed with some special herbs that are sold in readymade packets "for this purpose only" at ayurvedic medicine outlets. When she had finished, the Reddinenda gave Krishna new white clothes to wear. Such clothes are called "piruwotte", a term related to the word for anything which is ritually purified; pirisindui. The clothes were not new as such however, but old clothes "purified" by the hands of the Reddinenda. Nevertheless, although the clothes had belonged to someone else, they were considered new for the girl who was about to wear them. This custom is also mentioned in Wirz (1954), but in a more elaborate version, as he writes: "As soon as the bleeding sets in, the wife of the wash-man is sent for. She takes the blood-stained cloth away from the girl and gives her a clean one. The old cloth remains the woman's property and she is further presented with a piece of the girl's finery, such as a ring, a bracelet, or an ear-ring, in addition to a pot and three earthen dishes, a measure, and a reward of fifty cents. The woman anoints the girl's hair with oil, puts a coconut flower into the pot and moves the vessel three times in a circle above the girl's head" (Wirtz, 1954: 243). Krishna, now nicely purified and dressed up in white, was next welcomed by her mother on the doorstep of the back door of the house. Her mother received her with an "auspicious" oil-lamp in one hand and a meal of kiribat in the other, which she gave to her daughter. The oil-lamp should be kept lit throughout the whole period of isolation, and acts as her light of protection in the dark. Next she was taken to the "cambere" located behind the kitchen, a room without any windows. Regarding this room, Nur Yalman's informants make a slightly different choice: "The menstruating girl should be secluded in a small hut in the compound, but in ordinary households she is merely placed in a room without openings. The door is shut. When possible the place is tied around with a white thread." (Yalman, 1961: 29). Some local houses are actually designed with a windowless room placed in the centre, which makes it possible to walk around the walls inside the house. Throughout this auspicious period Krishna had to be kept out of sight of friends and neighbours, especially those of the male sex. The reason

for keeping her out of the sight of boys was the fear that they could cause her harm if they saw her in such a polluted condition. They could, for instance, harm her by saying unfortunate things or by thinking badly about her – both harmful inauspicious actions associated with the local belief in sorcery, black magic, or witchcraft.

"The girl is said to be in great danger. The segregation is partly to protect her from hostile powers (vas dos) and demons (yakkuva) who are attracted to her at his time, and partly to prevent her "pollution" from spreading." (Yalman 1961: 29). As we shall see, this time is crucial for a girl later in life if she has problems proving herself fertile or in going through the nine months of pregnancy in a successful manner. A young man I met from Colombo, whose family are Christians, informed me that his parents did not arrange for a puberty ceremony when his younger sister got her menses. They did however keep her closed up in her room for two weeks, not allowing anyone but her grandmother inside. Seemingly some parts of this ancient custom are regarded to be of too great a significance to be broken.

The Tamils, I was told, regard the first man a girl looks at after getting her first period as her husband to be. Since the most suitable husband according to the caste system is her first cousin, great care has to be exercised at this time. However, having said that it seems to me that the main idea for restricting the whereabouts of the girl in this period today is more or less limited to the general taboos associated with killi and that it is socially polite to protect others from the infectious impurity of the "big girl to become". For instance, a priest or a noble devotee preparing themselves for a grand offering ceremony or any person who was about to carry out important business, would avoid going to places where there was thought to be a high concentration of killi, such as at the house of a "big girl become" or a funeral house.



Krishna in the windowless room, behind the kitchen where she had stayed for 25 days – with her yet to be mature friends as support

"Those who live in kili-gedera (pollution house) have certain disadvantages. Firstly, they are in a negative state and must avoid auspicious objects and acts. Hence, they may not hold Buddhist chanting (pirit) and preaching (bana) ceremonies in the home. They may not enter devales, the temples dedicated to Hindu deities. The sacred place would be defiled and the person who entered would be killed or disabled by the deity. There are food-taboos on members of the pollution house. Thus no flesh, eggs, or dried fish must be eaten" (Yalman 1961: 29). The diet of Krishna throughout the period of isolation was vegetarian; meals containing fish, meat, eggs as well as any fried food were not given. This is because such food, according to the ayurvedic system, heats up the bodily humours, and also, according to the local cosmology this is the diet craved by the malevolent Yakku (demons) and other bad spirits, which can be attracted by the girl in this state. Moreover, she kept a piece of iron with her for protection from the Yakku's disti (glance).

On the first day of Khrisna's first period, kiribat (milk rice) and tea was prepared and given to the neighbours who in return brought small presents to the house. After finishing these small arrangements, the mother of Krishna went to the astrologer to find out the most

auspicious times for "the big girl become" ceremony, and what colours that should be worn when attending it. The astrologer obtained this information by reading the patterns of a single betel-leaf brought to him by Mother, and the prescriptions he gave are those noted in the program above. Since there was no unfortunate information given in Krishna's personal birth horoscope, no particular diet or purification ritual actions were prescribed. However, in the case of Devi, one of the other daughters of MotherMy, at her 'big girl become' rite, MotherMy had been concerned about her daughter's state of impurity and the fact that she was vulnerable to getting disti from Yakku, especially Kalu Kumarea, and therefore she put a mixture of polkiri (coconut milk) kaha (turmeric) and dehi (lime) into her daughter's hair before she gave her a bath. This mixture is a common one used to purify killi and consequently protects one from disti on vulnerable occasions.

"A new horoscope with reference to the day and hour of the beginning of the menses, has to be calculated by the sastra-kariya and is used in place of the birth horoscope. It is called "magul kili nekata kendra". From now on this is authoritative, and it is consulted on every important occasion, especially marriage (Wirtz 1954: 244). Twenty-five days is a very long time to abstain from bathing, and after the first two weeks Krishna's mother felt pity on her daughter who was by now deeply troubled by her own body odour, and so she gave her a bath. On the days that followed Krishna took a bath each morning. Every other day throughout the full period however, the Reddinenda had given Krishna fresh clothes to wear. Among Sri Lankans the general advice is not to have a bath during the first three days of the menses. The rule relates to ayurvedic medical principles of heating and cooling of the body. Menses and a bath make the humours unbalanced and the body becomes "over heated".

The role of the Reddinenda in this puberty rite differs from household to household. For some she is the one that gives them their first bath, for others she is just the provider of "piruwotte", fresh clothes. Some get a set of clothes to dress up in only after the initial bath, others get them every other day throughout the whole auspicious period. It was explained to me that the main reason why some chose not to be bathed by the hands of the washerwoman but by their mother or aunt was natural shyness. However, a woman like MotherMy thought it her personal duty to bathe her children and had limited the tasks of the Reddinenda, just letting her provide the clothes her girls would be dressed in after the initial

bath. Therefore, with the exception of the first day, Devi wore her own clothes throughout her two-week long period of isolation.

When I met Khrisna she was sitting inside the "cambere" with her best friends who had spent the night with her. They had been visiting her frequently throughout the whole period. In the past however, according to Wirtz, it was customary for the contact with "big girls to become" to be restricted to elderly women of the household. When I asked Krishna if she had been at the "cambere" all the time, Khrisna said no, that she had been allowed to sit in the "sale" with the rest of the family and watch TV at night. My translator, who was in her fifties, told me that in her case her mother had had a small hut built in the garden, by the foot of a thriving "milk tree", (kiri gasse/sap tree) such as in this case a jackfruit tree, where she had lived for 23 days. She had not been allowed to bathe at all. However, her friends and family loved her dearly so she had not been alone even though she became very smelly.

"During her seclusion, all her polluted clothes are put into a "cooking" pot. Urine, faeces, and menstrual blood also go into it. She is given special food and is not allowed to use plates, but only banana leaves, which also go into the pot. This cooking pot becomes highly charged and very dangerous. While the girl is secluded, she has a rice ponder (molgaha) in the room with her. This is an almost overt phallic symbol. At this stage in the proceedings members of the washermen's caste make their appearance. A male and female member of the washermen's caste is called for. One bathes the girl, and the other decorates the house" (Yalman, 1961: 30-31).

Then it is time for the: "rite of the first glance (pretama darsanaya). A pure cloth is spread on the ground and uncooked rice is sprinkled on it (hal). On the rice are placed special foods: (a) milk rice, bananas, and oil cakes of three sorts, which are associated with female genitals and breasts. A basin is prepared and filled with water. A coin is placed on it. An oil lamp is prepared. A coconut and a large knife are held ready… the girl is bathed three times with water… (and the washerwoman)) mixes special medicines in the water. However, it is best to wash her with milk because it is the antidote to pollution by menstrual blood. After the bath, the washerwoman takes the pot filled with pollution and breaks it against a milk-exuding tree. She dresses the girl in fresh clothes (Yalman, 1961: 31).

Krishna was very happy on this morning I noticed, with sparkling eyes and a self-aware smile. Following the time schedule of the astrologer, Krishna was taken to the back yard, to the concrete platform by the water tap. Wrapped up in a white cloth she stood facing a southerly direction while her mother watched the clock, carefully waiting for the auspicious time for the bath. At the predicted time she started to pour water over her daughter's head and rubbed her hair and body with soap. Neat and clean, Krishna put a white school uniform on and her dress was made complete with a white "sallue" draped over her head. White cloth is associated with purity and fertility, but also with moments of transition. According to the local religion, the white cloth is potent with the divine power of goddess Pattini and Buddha. Krishna grasped the oil lamp with her right hand, held a plate of kiribat draped in a white cloth in her left, and walked out of the back door into the garden. She took the pathway around the house and when she turned around the corner close to the front entrance she had to walk with her back to the house wall. As the astrologer had said, to make this auspicious moment fortunate, she should face the sky in a southerly direction. The entry was nicely decorated with banana tree leaves and red flowers, and on each side of the doorstep stood fresh clay-pots filled with water, white flowers, tender coconut flowers, and a small oil lamp. The mother of Krishna and other close relatives was smilingly waiting to receive her inside, and her father stood in the front yard ready to crack a big coconut with his machete when she crossed over the doorstep. At the correct time, "the big girl to become" turned around – stepped inside and was welcomed by her mother. Krishna returned the lamp that her mother had given her for protection 25 days previously and presented her with the plate of kiribat. Simultaneously her father cracked the auspicious coconut in two. One part landed with the fresh white coconut meat up which is a good sign and the other with the brown-husked shell up which is a bad sign. Cracking coconuts at auspicious moments is a way of making wishes come true, and so it was also for Krishna. The nut cracking was a wish from her father to his daughter, by the help of gods, to succeed in the tasks of adult life. The portent given by the coconut cracking indicated however that she would enter adulthood with both good and bad fortune, with prosperity and adversity.

Wirtz provides us with a more elaborate explanation of the custom as he states in his case study: "At the moment she enters, the mother's brother breaks a coconut on the threshold. The manner in which the two halves fall is examined with regard to the girl's future. If the

inside parts of both halves point up, it is considered as a very good omen: the girl will be spared from diseases and lead a very happy married life. If, however, both parts fall with their openings downwards, or the female half falls with its inside up and the male one face down, it is a bad sign: it means that in her marriage she will have the upper hand. But if the male half of the nut lies upward, and the female one points down, it is regarded as propitious for, in this case, the man will be the stronger partner in the marriage, which is as it ought to be according to Sinhalese and Indian ideas". (Wirtz, 1954: 243)

At this moment of the ritual, MotherMy used to perform a small rite of blessing for her daughters. According to her, because of the time of isolation that had just passed, Devi as well as the rest of her daughters had to be cured from tanikama dosa, loneliness. When receiving her daughter inside the house she therefore recited an asirivade kavi, verses of blessings greeting Buddha (Buddhu Saranai), gods (Devi Pihitai) and the triple gem (Ratnatre Saranai). After that, she had given her daughters three hugs while sniffing the fragrance of their cheeks; a gesture of deep love and affection.



Krishna, the Big Girl

Krishna was, yet again taken by her mother to the "cambere". There she presented Krishna with a new fashionable (pink) dress in plain material as well as golden jewellery: bangles, necklaces, a diadem, a watch and earrings and lastly, black platform shoes of lacquer-painted

leather. She was dressed up in imitation of a bride. Khrisna, who from now on would be considered a big girl, re-entered the living room where her mother, father, grandmother, elder sister, baby brother and other close relations welcomed her. She worshipped them all in the most honourable way, by falling down on her knees and touching their feet, following the common ranking order of worshipping her father, mother and grandmother first. However, the children younger than her bowed down to her. When she had stood up after having bowed down to her father, he presented Krishna with money wrapped in a betel leaf. The procedure was repeated until all of her close relatives and the businessman who was invited as the guest of honour had been greeted and each one had given her some gold jewellery or a monetary gift. The custom of gift giving, seen in relation to the rite as a pre-marriage event, works to provide the girl with wealth – a dowry.

4.4.3 On the Social Dimension

Apart from protecting women in their highly pollutive condition from sorcery and malevolent spirits, the puberty rite is a very efficient way of making the mature condition of the girl public. Yalman writes that the girl is introduced just before the "wedding party" takes off, to her partner to be, to a first cousin of her father's choice. My own informants made a priority of visiting their relatives at weddings and "mature to come" ceremonies, as well as at birth rites and at funerals – the arenas for the "public meetings" in their caste community. Deborah Winslow (1980) studied the puberty rituals of the "ethnic" communities in Sri Lanka and made the interesting finding that the ritual procedures of the groups were quite similar. The difference concerned the supernaturals that protected the rite. The Sinhalese version celebrated the goddess Pattini, whereas in the Muslim version the goddess of protection was Mohammed's daughter Fatima, and in the Christian version this role was given to the Virgin Mary. As mentioned above, at Winslow's time of writing the Tamil link had already been established by Wirtz. According to the religious belief beings of every world are interrelated and negotiate their place in the cosmic hierarchy around the notion of purity and pollution. There are many gods and goddesses in the local pantheon from which the women seek protection in times of "high pollution" (killi) such as their first period and birth, but also from which they can ask for help if they face problems in relation with pregnancy. The divinities do moreover help in cases, as shown above, where the

women are subjected to "killi" (impurity caused by the Yakku) or "vas dos" (sorcery). The social world of women has a different nature than that the being in the world of every beings (laukika) engages. There is very much to be said about gender issues in Sri Lanka; the social roles and status of women, the rules of social conduct which women are subjected to, social problems, marriage customs, the many life cycle rituals and charms, caste issues, the astrological significance, the different laws of partnership of the ethnic groups, the common practice of love marriages and much more. In fact, there is so much that I decided to leave out my own work on the subject completely from this thesis. The aim of this chapter was to introduce the ritual and to establish the link which the patients of the Rata Yakuma experience believe exists between their present suffering and the dangerously polluted state they were in at the moment when they had their menses – in the period between when the menses arrived and their purifying bath and "wedding ceremony".

4.5 Summing Up

4.5.1 "The Big Girl Become" and Rata Yakuma Link

Hugh Nevill (1955) suggested that the cult of the Riddi Bishawas to which offerings are made in the Rata Yakuma rite was originally in the hands of ceremonial masters from the washermen's caste. We have now looked into the way the cosmology of the puberty rite of the washermen and the "Rata Yakuma" ritual of the drummer caste is interrelated today and shown evidence that the ritual service is under the authority of different castes. Through the study of the myth of origin of the Rata Yakuma ritual we have come to understand the cosmography of the ritual as well as the key offering procedures of the rite to be addressed in the next chapter. Moreover, we learned that the women are in need of protection from the Yaka Kalu Kumare, in particular when they reach puberty. This "protection plan" is believed to have failed if women face fertility problems diagnosed by the Aduras caused by this yaka in their adulthood. The Riddi Bishawas are noble Buddhist queens who have both the power to cure ailments caused by Kalu Kumare, and barren queens who conceived children due to their offering of the celestial cloth to Buddha. The power of this boon is re-enacted in the Rata Yakuma ritual to be presented in detail in the next chapter.

5 RATA YAKUMA

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Introductory Lines

In this chapter I set out to present the important procedures and textual and improvised narrations of a contemporary performance of the Rata Yakuma ritual. The documentation of the ritual is important in relation to the discussion to follow in chapter 7 on skills, creativity and changes in "orthodox" cultural performances as a Tovil rite. In chapter 4, from the viewpoint of an historical detective the historical and organic development of the Rata Yakuma ritual were addressed, as well as its hybrids that are created through the ritual works of different communities, cults and religious movements. The question of what continues and changes in a ritual like the Rata Yakuma has guided this research project, and in order to understand this process it is important to look into both the aesthetical and institutional aspects of the system. This chapter is thus dedicated to the aesthetic dimension of the "Tovil system". Based on the information obtained through my research on the Rata Yakuma rite and public performances of its central drama acts, I discovered that there have been recent innovations in costumes, pantomimic gestures and comedy dialogue. The possible wider consequences of this finding will be addressed in chapter 7.

Through my research on the Rata Yakuma ritual I learned that the Aduras perceive the Rata Yakuma rite to be influenced by the dramaturgical method of Bharatamuni, written down in the ancient book Natyasastra. Consequently, my aim became to look into the interrelationship between the work and the actual ritual. The contemporary Aduras turned out to have vague knowledge on the subject and had not contributed significantly to the creation of the present form of the Rata Yakuma ritual. Therefore, my research on the link became a textual one and was carried out in the post-fieldwork period. When learning the text I realised that it was on the one hand a manual for dance drama and on the other a theory of aesthetic experience. In my thesis on the Mahasona Samayama I made a performance analysis of the ritual and demonstrated how the interaction between the patient, the Aduras, the supernaturals and the audience was played out throughout the rite. I also discussed in depth the phenomenological difference between ritual efficacy and

entertainment and the degree of involvement and experiences of the different categories of people in the audiences present. Lastly I also addressed the phenomenological differences between traditional art shows and Tovils, and the techniques employed by the Aduras in order to avoid direct engagement with the supernaturals in the former kind of performances by the use of stage props and by introducing slight errors into their acting (Larsen, 1998). I will not repeat that argument, nor develop it further even though the knowledge I have gained on the Natyasastra theory invites this, but instead I will look into how the theory of the Natyasastra and more recent comments on the text enlighten us on the aesthetic plane of the Tovil rites in a multi-dimensional manner. It is my ambition to investigate why the Aduras insisted that the dance/drama of the Rata Yakuma ritual followed the manual, even though "Tovil dance" is very different to the classical Indian dances most explicitly influenced by the Natyasastra – the Kathakali and Bharatanatyam in movement patterns, expression, form and style.

5.1.2 Preliminary Introduction to the Natyasastra

Through my studies of the Natyasastra text I realised that it was a highly developed theory on multi sensorial aesthetic experience on the one hand, while for the artist, it was a highly useful manual on the aesthetic technology of dance/drama. The theory of the Natyasastra is in other words not a theory about how to cure mental disorders through ritual drama, despite its detailed descriptions of how to act out the physical expressions of "transitory emotions" affected by emotional stress. In this theory the identified emotions work as cues for how the actors bring about the "bhavas" sentiments in their acting; movements which when put together in the right manner affect a distinct mode of emotion in the audience – a mode conceived as "rasa". The Natyasastra is, as such, a theory about aesthetic experience and the possible positive mental effects brought about in a body worked into, by means of performance, a state of balanced emotions. As discussed in the introduction, a balanced mind is a core predisposition of the Buddhist subject that enables the realisation of other more superior Buddhist goals of subjective transformations.

An overarching aim for this work is to look into the connection between cultural policy programs (and bodies for "the distribution of the sensible") and the present status of "Tovil dance" in Buddhist popular culture. Crucial for my argument is the acceptance of the

ontological position of Ranciere; that any community forms on the basis of a shared mode of existence (Ranciere, 2004). A ritual practice such as the Tovils is a powerful aesthetic media through which a communal existence becomes constituted, mediated, and engaged. Significantly different from "the arts", the Tovils engage with many co-existing beings of this world (laukika) not only those dwelling in the human realm. The case of the Rata Yakuma is presented here with the aim of investigating the aesthetic dimension of a cultural performance as a tovil rite. "Tovil dance" is an aesthetic regime and as a practice of "works of sensibility", which in Deleuze and Guattari's terms on the "plane of composition" is constituted by concepts, percepts and affects it has a field of operation (Deleuze/Guattari, 1996). It is however not Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the aesthetic, but the theory of the Natyasastra that informs my understanding of the aesthetic dimension of the "Tovil system". It is my view that particularly its ideas about primary emotions and its many secondary feelings engaged through aesthetic work, provides a theoretical model for how such "shared modes of existence" are effectuated. Moreover, due to its encompassing cultural/social/religious significance and aesthetic complexity it also illustrates why communal modes of existence come in so many variations. Before we get into the presentation of the rite, some information on my informants and the way to read the text is required.

5.1.3 The Key Informants

Somatilleka is the key informant in relation to my research on the Rata Yakuma Ritual. Somatilleka is the fifth generation in his parampara (teacher genealogy); he learned the art from his father and no other son but him chose to continue their family's caste profession. "Maddu Aiya" – is regarded as the main teacher (gurunanse) of Somatilleka, and despite being aged over eighty he was still performing rituals during my time of research. Somatilleka was well known to the officers at the Cultural Ministry; for instance the head of the dance board of the Art Council was his personal friend. Moreover a renounced Adura of the Matara province, S.L.H. Fernando, who is a former member of the national dance troupe, Arts Council member and lecturer at the Institute of Aesthetic Studies, is his uncle. Somatilleka has achieved a position as a kind of national "pop star". He is not just a professional ritualist, he is also a brilliant artist/entertainer. In addition to "Maddu Aiya", Somatilleka regularly works with his colleagues: Tillekeratna, Dharmasena and Chandraratna,

the drummers Siripala, Martin and Arniss – all Aduras experiencing the same public acclaim as himself. The eight of them form the "troupe" with which I carried out field-work most frequently. It is however to the late Adura Ariyadasa that I am mostly indebted for my introductory knowledge on the Rata Yakuma rite. Before he passed away he had gained a great reputation for his powerful (love) charms, and his many successful "cures" in relation to conception, pregnancy, and birth. For instance, he made rare offerings as the Bali (clay offering) for the Balegiridosa. Baligiri is a spirit harming infants, the 0-2 years old. One of the things that Ariyadasa brought to my attention was how the "pillu" (substantial pollution caused by disti) conditions ran in families, and that some villages are more troubled than others. In one of his "regular" cases the mother had had over 30 rites performed – the daughter whom I met was having her ninth. With Ranciere (2004) one could say that these villagers, in particular in their association with the other beings of laukika, engaged a distinct mode of being, which, according to his perception, was essential for any community to evolve and maintain itself. Somatilleka is probably more knowledgeable on the rite than the late Ariyadasa was, but it was initially his "star status" as a performer of the Rata Yakuma ritual, and the dramatic acts of the rite of which he was a national icon that caught my interest. Somatilleka had achieved his reputation due to the way he pulled off the performance of the dance/drama acts which narrate the themes of: "Riddi Bishavas' toilet act", "the spinning and weaving of the cloth act" and "the nursing of the child act". He performs the roles with the greatest feminine touch, while simultaneously bringing forth an extremely obscene and reckless character. Due to his outstanding interpretation he receives special invitations to perform at the Rata Yakuma rituals in Sri Lanka. Somatilleka was proud of the fact that the costumes that he used at the Rata Yakuma rite were new inventions of his own creation, and that he earlier did not dress up as Riddi in the Rata Yakuma, but that he, in his "early years", used the basic Tovil dress decorated with a special hair-band and jewellery made of natural fibre (gokkole) for the acts. The designing of new costumes, he explained, came with the many jobs he did at "traditional art shows".

Another innovation in the ritual procedures that Somatilleka emphasised had developed throughout the last two decades was that due to the public request for Tovil "entertainment" they had included the Daha-Ata Sanni mask drama in the early morning watch. In its "original" version the Rata Yakuma was finished in the middle of the night (about 0300 AM

– 0400 AM). The mask drama comedy of the Sanni Demons (who are 18 in number) is quite elaborate and with the 8 paliyas – bringers of godly items of protection inclusive – involves the performance of 26 mask-dance acts. As it is a comedy act the Daha-Ata Sanni is regarded by the Aduras as entertaining to "please the mind" of the audience. In the standard offering procession (pella paliya) that Somatilleka followed, the Daha-Ata Sanni was not included and even though the offering act was performed in some of the rites that I watched it will consequently not be discussed further in this work.

I have personally seen seven Rata Yakuma rites during my many fieldtrips to Sri Lanka. Three of these were during my first fieldwork trip in 1996-1997. This is a few compared with the ritual that I wrote about in my major thesis; the Mahasona Samayama, which I viewed about 40 times. The discrepancy in numbers reflects the present frequency of Rata Yakuma performances. The drama acts (toilet, cloth and nursing acts) of the rite were popular in all kinds of traditional art performances so this part of the rite is solidly researched. Moreover, the rituals observed were led by five different Maha-Charis, leading Aduras, and as a consequence the ritual procedures of the rites differed in each performance. Somatilleka participated in five of the rites that I watched and the following rite is therefore put together in the "standard order of ritual procedures" which Somatilleka holds as "correct". Somatilleka was very kind and spoke freely about the Rata Yakuma rite with me, and when visiting him last in 2006, he assured me that there was still plenty more to investigate. In other words, the following presentation of the Rata Yakuma ritual is not "perfect" but narrowed down to the key offering procedures and the presentation of the most important songs and the comedy dialogue performed throughout the three extensive dramatic acts of the ritual procedure.

5.1.4 A Reader's Guide to this Chapter

The time dimension is a very important part of the aesthetic potential of the ritual cure. Firstly, it is the time span between when the thread is tied and the revisit of the Adura. Meanwhile the patient follows an ajurvedic diet given by the Adura. If the patient recovers, then comes the time between consultation and the actual ritual. A part of the diagnostic process is a vow to the Yakku that such and such an offering will be provided in return for giving up the patient's body. Subsequently the day for the promised ritual cure arrives and

throughout the performance the patient and the Aduras make a long series of offerings. The more severe the patient's condition is, the longer is the offering cure prescribed. The time dimension, in other words, is a significant feature of the ritual aesthetics and its efficacy. According to the Rasa aesthetics, the rasa (sentiment) "evolves in the air" in the sense that the artist by the means of his performance of a series of bhavas (expressions/gestures of emotions) engages defined sentiments, such as joy or sorrow, in the audience present. According to the Natyasastra, extensive and time consuming performances of the bhavas are required for the "rasa" to evolve. In order to demonstrate this facet of the aesthetics of the ritual system, as well as the complexity of the rites, I have therefore decided to present in detail the offerings of the main sequence of the Rata Yakuma rite that lasts from about 1100 PM up to 0330 AM. I emphasise though that it is not necessary for the wider argument to read through the text columns as they are added purely because of their informative and documentary value.

The Rata Yakuma ritual is, in short, a curing rite and is performed for the safe delivery of babies. In order to bring about safe delivery the rite work towards some phenomenal ends which fit into the categories of Catherine Bell (1997) in chapter 3, such as: acts of purification (of pillu), transactions between the patient and the malevolent supernaturals, a re-ordering of the cosmos and the "pleasing of the mind". The major offerings of this rite are created for the Yaka Kalu Kumare who played a central part in the script of "the Ritual", and Riddi Bishava whose possible mythological origins were addressed in chapter 4. The ritual that I describe below gives an overview of the important acts of the ritual procedures in the first (evening) and second (midnight) "watch" of the ritual. The second watch, the Rata Yakuma Samayama and the staging of the offerings to the Riddi Bishawas are, due to their status in this work, presented in more detail than the first watch. The procedures described are informed by the observations that I made during the seven rituals that I personally viewed. This information is complementary to the interviews that I conducted with the Aduras, particularly the Adura Somatilleka who helped me with details on the offering procedures (the 32 pella paliyas) of the "midnight watch" or the Riddi Yage Samayama. The Aduras' creative potential was most clearly expressed in their ability to 'pun" on words with similar meanings and to improvise comedy dialogues creating the many "comic relief situations" throughout the rite. In this regard Somatilleka, in dialogue with the

drummers Raja, Arniss, Martin and Siripala showed exceptional talent and I have transcribed the full dialogue from one rite in order to document one version of this dialogue at one historical moment of time.

5.2 The Natyasastra – The Dramaturgic Technology of the Senses, and Emotional Effects

5.2.1 Rasa Aesthetics

Most recent academic writings on Rasa aesthetics are written from the perspectives of dramatists, dancers and the actors and their interest in the Natyasastra text mirrors the fact that the text is first and foremost a manual for the creation of dance/drama. The dramatist and performance theorist Richard Schechner has been working with Indian religious festivals and drama traditions for quite some time and published a paper on the way the theory has helped his actors to create more convincing expressions of emotions. In this article "Rasaesthetics" (Schechner, 2001), Schechner argues that the acting method instructed in the Natyasastra has proved more effective than the Stanislawski method used by companies such as Centre Stage Productions – the team behind the play described in chapter 3: "the Ritual" – in expressing emotions and bringing about affective states in the audience. In the same work he goes on to discuss the physical interrelation between human emotion and the millions of neurons triggered by the gut – for some neuron psychologists an organ perceived as our second brain – a fact that to him makes sense of the analogy made in Indian aesthetic theory between the flavours of cooking and feeling and the aesthetic aspects of the performance arts. Bharatamuni himself compared the art of cooking to the specific emotions brought forth in the spectator through the medium of dance drama, through the performance of a series of strictly choreographed expressions, bhavas. As he says: "The sentiment is produced from a combination of determinants, consequents and transitory states. Is there any instance parallel to it? Yes, it is said that as taste (rasa) results from a combination of various spices, vegetables and other articles, and as six tastes (rasa) are produced by articles such as raw sugar or spices or vegetables, so the Dominant States, when they come together with various other states attain the quality of the Sentiment" (Bharata-Muni, 1950: 105–106). And more: How is rasa tasted? It is said that just as well-disposed

persons while eating food cooked with many kinds of spices enjoy its tastes and attain pleasure and satisfaction, so cultured people taste the Dominant States while they see them represented by an expression of the various States with Words, Gestures and the Temperament and derive pleasure and satisfaction" (Ibid: 105–106).

We leave the proposed correlation between cooking, the neurons of the gut and dance drama uncontested. Of interest to us here is Schechner's (2001) observation that: "In expressing the emotions (the actor) by means of abhinaya (sensing) one may or may not create feelings in oneself, but a good actor always creates feelings in the partakers (the audience). In order for rasas to be shared, performers must enact the abhinaya of a particular emotion or concentration of emotions according to the traditions of a specific genre of performance. The feelings aroused may be personal, intimate and indescribable: but the emotions enacted are consciously constructed and objectively managed" (Ibid: 33). The acting theory of the Natyasastra is, in other words, a manual of a pragmatic technology of how the actors succeed in bringing the audience into a particular state of dominant emotion by the means of aesthetic work. Now to the theory and some interpretations of it.

5.2.2 The "Natyasastra" of Bharatamuni

The Natyasastra of Bharatamuni is a theory of ritual drama and dance and provides the dramatist with information about the relationship between sound, movement, gesture, and text and how composed combinations affect sensual experience. The Natyasastra is in many ways written as a manual and through its detailed descriptions we learn about fashion, common social activities and gender roles, suitable behaviour and physical expressions of emotions and intent in India about 2000 years ago (some say 600 BC, others 200 AD (Schechner, 2001)). The work provides the reader with information on the origin of drama, the playhouse, obligatory preliminary offerings to gods, of dance, sentiments, emotions, prosody, metrical patterns and much more. The text is very intricate since it serves to enlighten the relationship between different sense modalities and shows how to evoke very precise states of emotion in the spectator, and for illustration Bharata gave vivid descriptions of different bodily postures and their corresponding emotion. The debates following this work centre on the crucial question of primary or secondary feelings, whether an aesthetic experience can possibly transform primary moods or not, and the question of whether there

is a qualitative difference between a divine and a secular aesthetic experience. The work has inspired dramatists and other artists as well as philosophers since its creation about 2000 years ago, and needless to say, it still does.

The history of the author of the Natyasastra, if there is such a person, is unknown. Some think that the name Bharatamuni could just be the abbreviation for bhava (movement), raga (melody), tala (rhythm), three constituting parts of Indian dance, while muni means silent, and that the Natyasastra in fact is the work of a collective involved in the practice of dance drama, not performed by some particular person living in one place at one time. The text provides evidence of knowledge of both North Indian and South Indian, Vedic and Agamic (dravidian) rituals and includes elements from all (K. Vatsyayan, 1996). To keep things simple in regard to references, I will keep on referring to Bharata-Muni as an author. The Natyasastra is, as I read it, not only a theory of dance or drama; neither is it purely a manual with instructive precepts of practice. It is something in between, nonetheless certainly a theory of practice. On the practice of drama as instructed by the Natyasastra it is said that: "Drama represents a generalized view of the world and the actions of persons divested of particularities of character: it does not deal with individuals and their specific situation and emotions. The chief goal of drama is to produce rasa, the aesthetic emotion, evoked by the appropriate mood built cumulatively through not only words, but also by mime and gesture, music and dance, costume and jewellery. Rasa is not raw emotion but emotion depersonalized, divested of all the accidents of circumstance; it is emotion represented, distilled by art. Sanskrit drama is therefore a blend of many elements: verse and prose, dance, music and spectacle" (Chandra Rajan, 1997: 9). Ritual drama in the choreographed fashion that one finds performed in Sri Lanka includes all the qualities mentioned here. The choreographies include mime, gesture, music, dance, costume, jewellery, songs, comedy and much more. The narration of text through codified bodily gestures – particularly hand gestures (mudras) as suggested in the manual – are however not merged together in the art form of "Tovil dance". In "Tovil dance" the movement patterns are composed on the basis of a rhythmic structure (tale) and the gestures are perceived asthe form of sound and sound of form and are not gestural articulations of the concept narratives referred to in the songs recited as is common for the mudras performed in the Natyasumangali tradition of Tamil Nadu for instance (Kersenboom-Story, 1987). The basic principles of yantra/mantra

(form/sound) in Tantric metaphysics are in general important components of the "Tovil system" and the idea of sound as a figure in dance and its communicative capacities is conceptually similar to the mantras and the yantra structure of many ritual offering "props" at work in the rites.

5.2.3 Ritual Drama and Sacrifice – Aesthetic and Divine Experience

Ritual drama according to the Natyasastra is promoted as a secular practice compared with the contemporary common practice of ritual sacrifice. The "break" with the worlds outside this world at the "drama house" is not complete however, and in the introduction one gets information about the importance of purification and consecration of body and mind, as well as the theatrical space before the dance drama begins. By doing a yajna (puja) offering ceremony including chanting of mantras the ritual space is enlivened, and has life breathed into it (djivan kirima). The procedures described in the manual are similar to the preliminary offering acts for supernatural goodwill and protection, carried out by the Aduras of the "Tovil system". The ritual-drama space, just like that of ritual sacrifice, constitutes a micro cosmic "representation" of the macro cosmos and the "centre" of its constitutive forces. Ritual drama is enjoyable for both gods and men, but its compositional structure does not necessarily bring forth an experience of the gods, a unique sort of experience described as the collapse between the cognitive divide between man, god and nature (K. Vatsyayan, 1996). Ritual drama is (for the Hindu) thus a possible source through which one can reach overarching moral and ethical "ends" such as dharma (duty), artha (wealth), kama (refined sensibilities) and moksa (liberation) (Ibid.).

Ritual dramas are in the "Tovil system" integrated parts of a grand offering rite, and I once witnessed a Deva Tovil where a priest, a Pattini Hami and a group of "devotees" disregarding the present proceedings at the ritual arena of the Deva Tovil, broke their way through and performed their own "personal" acts of devotion by the Tovil altar. The group presented offerings at the Pattini shrine on the hillside as well, and throughout the night and the following day and night of the ritual performance, they were dancing up and down the pathway in a semi trance led by the priest and a small "kavadi" orchestra. No doubt the effort of the devoted group brought forth an experience of the ritual that was very different from that experienced by the rest of us just seated on our mats watching the ritual

proceedings. What the nature of the difference in experience concerned is one of the questions raised by Abhinavagupta, an Indian philosopher rethinking the work of Bharatamuni a thousand years later. Bharatamuni on his side was not interested in the "mystic experiences" but sought to create a secular practice theory on Indian dance and drama. Bharatamuni was nonetheless highly inspired by the insights on perception, the bodily emotional register, feelings and aesthetic experience made available to him through lessons by Indian ascetics.

5.2.4 The "Natyasastra" and its Theory of Emotion and Feelings

The theory of emotion and sensibility of the Natyasastra are identified by Bharatamuni as inspired by the Atharva Veda – the Veda issuing the principles of magico- religious healing. In a curing rite, its principles of ritual purification are employed, as mentioned in the discussion on tovils and their many basic concepts. The logic of body, sense and mind which Bharata's theory introduces goes as follows. There are eight primary sentiments (rasa); however only four original ones. These are the erotic, furious, heroic and odious which enable the sentiments of the comic, pathetic, marvellous and terrible. The eight sentiments are associated with the colours of and the dominant sentiment of popular gods: light green (erotic as Vishnu), red (furious as Rudra), light orange (heroic as Indra), blue (odious as Shiva), white (comic as Pramathas), ash (pathetic as Yama), yellow (marvellous as Brahman) and black (terrible as Yama kala). Bhava is the feelings, instincts, emotions or mental states that can be distinguished in the human soul. These are: delight (love), laughter, sorrow, anger, heroism, disgust, wonder, fear, and serenity. Permanent states correspond with the poetical expressions: erotic, comic, pathetic, furious, heroic, odious, wonderful, terrible and serene (humble). When all the senses are evoked and have affected the balance of the mind the experience evoked through drama culminates in the highest rasa, which is the santa rasa; the rasa of peace. This notion links together the theory of rasa to that of the Brahman experiencing god through meditative contemplation (J.N. Mohanty, 2000). But things are not as simple as this because, according to J.N. Mohanty, Bharata makes the bringing about of rasa dependent on three factors: "The rasa arises out of the cooperation and interaction of three factors: bibhava, anubhava and vyabhicaribhava. The first, bibhava, is the cognition or understanding that makes representations (words, gestures and internal feelings) capable of being sensed. The second, anubhava, is the actual sensing of these elements. The third,

vyabhicaribhava, consists in subsidiary facts that strengthen one's experience. These three together generate rasa, bringing a sthayibhava or a permanent mood to an actually relished state" … The exact relation between these three factors and the rasa that comes to be experienced has been a matter of some disputation among exponents of the theory" (Mohanty, 2000: 135). In my understanding, the model does not differ from Deleuze and Guattari's (1996) grasp of aesthetics as a "plane of composition" that is constituted of the "components" of percepts, affects and concepts. It differs however in the way the concepts are perceived as integral to sense perceptions. Moreover, Deleuze and Guattari do not mention any subsidiary facts, and what these facts are is not clearly stated in the Natyasastra either. What Bharata does is to describe a variety of faculties involved in sense perception and his third factor makes reference to the aesthetic quality of the medium and the spectator's intentional willingness to be "seduced" by the acts – the degree of sensible involvement.

The determinant for the erotic sentiment proceeds from the dominant state (bhava) of love, and can be triggered through the determinants "like hearing the voice of the beloved", "enjoyment of garlands" etc. The consequents of separation from what motivates a determinant sentiment such as love could be anxiety and inactivity. In other words, the primary sentiments (rasa) are determined by some contextual expressions (dramatic scenes and narratives) and the performance of the gesture and expressions of the determinants engages a set of possible consequent states of being, so-called transitory states. Moreover, Bharata-Muni singles out eight temperamental states as well, states which are only possibly engaged through the imagination (of the actor). These states (bhava) are caused by the consecration of the mind, and are paralysis, perspiration, goose bumps, change of voice, trembling, change of colour, weeping and fainting. In other words, by expressing the (forty-nine) states (bhavas) in particular sequences of determinants and consequences of the dominant, transitory and temperamental states, one brings forth a special feeling and evokes a particular sense of sentiment (rasa) in the spectator. This sentiment is the sentiment chosen as the main theme for the play. A mixture of sentiments represented through a careful play will bring forth the feeling of pleasure in the spectator (Ibid: 147). It is interesting that Bharatamuni here makes use of the word 'pleasure', but without making any explicit

reference to the concept of pleasure (santa rasa) as a ninth rasa which became a critical point of discussion for those re-examining his text.

Bharatamuni himself compares the aesthetic process of ritual drama with cooking, but the key metaphor of the whole text of the Natyasastra is held by K. Vatsyayan to be taken from botany. According to her: "The Natyasastra employed the metaphor of the seed and the tree, the process of sprouting, blooming and decay and renewal, throughout, to comprehend the nature of the aesthetic universe. It was an organism; the process was primary" (Vatsyayan, 1996: 165). In many ways the knowledge of the ancient Indian sages (seers) was based on a taxonomic system where everything perceivable was put together, analogously systematised and synthesised into one theory; one holistic integrated cosmology capturing any possible phenomena, dynamism, cause and effect. Gnoli describes it in this way: "In India, thinkers have never dissociated abstract speculation from a concrete realisation of its complicated metaphysical structure, which they felt themselves attracted by their nature to translate everything into living reality. This position, at once metaphysical and psychological, led them, with the passage of time, to conceive reality in an idealistic form" (R. Gnoli 1956: 23). Kapila Vatsyayan identifies similar traits in the work of Bharata as: "He seeks to synthesise diverse disciplines, and asserts that the arts have the latency and potency of bringing together all aspects of life – from the physical to the psychical and even metaphysical – in a meaningful whole. The arts provide both pleasure and education and are a vehicle of beauty, duty and conduct. All this they achieve through the refinement of the senses, sense-perception, particularly of the eye and the ear" (1996: 25). And moreover: "Bharata shows a deep understanding of the senses, and the body and mind relationship. This is the sub-stratum of his entire work. The inner states of consciousness find expression on many levels. There is an intrinsic relationship and mutuality of mind, intellect, brain and body. Diverse configurations emerge which can be identified as distinct states of being, or as what are commonly called emotive states. For Bharata, it is these states of the total human being which constitute the content of art" (Ibid: 19). The central contribution to the perception of arts which the Natyasastra provides is its focus on the interrelationship between what is expressed and perceived, the inclusion of the space between movement, sound, text, sets of characters and perception – affective states. The focus of Bharata's aesthetic theory is fixed on the formation of what is made to happen between the actors performance and the

audience (which includes the supernaturals). The notion of space has always been crucial in Indian aesthetics, and in the art of dance space is analogous with time or duration. As the Natyasastra notifies, it is not only special times of the day or night where humans are more or less susceptible to the inducing of specific emotions, but some expressions should be dwelled upon for a longer time than others for the intended "rasa" to evolve. An example for illustration could for instance be the contemplative slow motion of Buddhist temple chant, dance, and music, which potentially moves with the emotional state of tranquillity.

Exploring the nature of emotions further, the composers of the Vastusutra Upanisad (Boner/Sauma/Baumer, 1982), an Indian Sanskrit text on paintings, describe the eight rasas in four groups and take each pair to relate to each other in the following pattern of cause and effect. "In the Vastusutra they (rasa) are presented in a complete psychological order, where every sentiment is the consequence of the previous one and the cause of the following one: The basic emotion of all living beings is Love. Love creates Mirth and Laugher, but often also leads to Sorrow and Pain. Pain degenerates into Anger, but Anger can be sublimated into Heroism, which leads to Fighting. Fighting motivated by anger creates Fear. One party is defeated and feels Disgust, and so gives up the fight. Whoever thus relinquishes everything finally finds Peace" (Ibid: 18). In the Natyasastra, Bharata puts forward a schema illustrating transitory feelings, and subcategories of expressions of emotion from which the transitory feelings evolve. The way the composers of the Vavstusutra Upanisad see the emotions as being dependent on a special mood of evolvement arising is not a part of Bharata's aesthetic theory – and it is of course uncertain whether he would have agreed with this development of the theory or not.

5.2.5 Santarasa – the Taste of Peace

Summing up the philosophical works on the subject of rasa J.N. Mohanty holds that the theory: "…provides a connecting link between semantic theory, aesthetics, religion and metaphysics. At the same time, its theory of sthayibhava or permanent moods connects aesthetic theory to physiology and psychology" (2000: 136). Abhinavagupta was the most critical voice in debate concerning the notion of the ninth rasa, the santa rasa, experience of tranquil bliss, and the debate on primary and secondary moods, or as he himself says about the term: "Santarasa has been taught as a means to the highest happiness. It arises from a

desire to secure the liberation of the self and leads to knowledge of the truth" (Masson/Patwardhan, 1969: 93). Like Kant, the most influential philosopher on aesthetics in the Western tradition, in his work "the third critique" on the judgement of taste 700 years later, Abhinawagupta holds the view of art as an activity freed from practical interest and a medium through which truth can be realised. An aesthetic experience in this tradition holds that it is an experience of something that is neither real nor unreal. Taking such an inter-relational stance, Masson and Patwardhan (1969) find that Abhinavagupta must have been familiar with the writings of Kashmir Saiva texts illuminating the concept of truth where it is held that: "Meditating on the knowledge (that exists on its own), between two thoughts one should fix (the mind) on that empty middle space. Suddenly abandoning both of them, truth will appear in the middle" (Ibid: 27). What is more, he described drama in the form of a negation of what it is different from: "A drama is a thing whose essence, so far as the spectator is concerned, consists of rasa that can only be known by direct experience in the form of aesthetic enjoyment which is altogether different from correct knowledge, erroneous cognition, doubt, uncertainty, non-determination and ordinary knowledge. It is distinct from worldly objects, and also different from such things as their imitation, reflection and pictorial presentation, determination, fancy and magic shows" (Masson/Patwardhan, 1969: 51). "Coming into being as a creation, art is autonomous and imitates nothing in real life but just mimics the real. The artist creates visions revealing nonetheless the realm of already existing states of affairs" (Ibid: 154). Aesthetic works are thus different from the real but due to the limits of human imagination and capacities of creation (mimicry) aesthetic works are creations in continual existence alongside the real. On the level of experience however, Abhinawagupta argues that Rasa is just an imitation of a permanent mental state and that is what makes it different to the permanent mental state itself. Rasa is the unique experience appearing in inter-relation with aesthetic practice (drama and poetry are his examples). Moreover, he divides he mental cognition involved in an aesthetic experience into three factors. "When they are not part of real life but are elements of poetical expression, event the causes, effects and concomitant elements, just as the permanent mental states, take another name and are called respectively Determinants, Consequents and Transitory Mental States. Of course, from the spectator's point of view the consequents do not follow the feelings, as they do in the ordinary life, but they act as sorts of causes which intensify and prolong the feeling brought about by the determinants". (Gnoli, 1956: 17). Abhinavagupta is

aware that the imitations to be tasted through a dramatic performance depend on the spectre of comparable experiences providing fortifying imagery when perceiving the artwork. Moreover, he holds that the spectator distinguishes between real feelings and "rasa" and is critical on this point in regard to Bharatamuni's theory, specifically the point: "that rasas arise because of the spectator's real sorrow, (because if so) he would be genuinely unhappy and would no longer return to watch such dramatic performances in which there was karuna (the rasa "housing" the "flavour" of all the other rasas) over again. Therefore rasa does not arise, nor is it induced by suggestion, for if such emotions as love, existing in a dormant form, were to arise or be induced by suggestion, then there would occur the difficulty that to a greater or lesser extent the spectators would make actual physical attempts to posses the object presented before them on stage". (Masson/Patwardhan, 1969: 64-65). In other words, Abhinavagupta insists that an experience of "rasa" is qualitatively different from real sentiments which come with what we could recognise as a sense of existential "urgency" featured in "normal" feelings. At last he provides the skilled "sage" with thorough descriptions of the difference between an aesthetic experience and a religious experience through the concept of the highest rasa – the santa rasa, which literally means the taste of peace.

Abhinavagupta takes a position as one of the greatest Indian "sages" – seers. The question of the phenomenal difference in "normal", "aesthetic", and "religious" experience I leave aside. The Rata Yakuma ritual is an aesthetic creation and the notions of Bharatamuni on how the primary emotions, when expressed through "bhavas", bring forth "rasa" is however a central element of the curing brought about by means of a Tovil rite and important for the reading of the ritual here at issue.

5.2.6 The "Natyasastra" – and the Rata Yakuma

Similar to the dance drama of Bharatamuni, the "Tovil system" ritual choreographies include mime, gesture, music, dance, costume, jewellery, songs, comedy etc. The greatest discrepancy between the work of the "Natyasastra artists" and the Aduras concerns the emphasis on dance as movement-text. The dance/dramas start with the epics such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata. The actors create in performance movement-texts, or gestures of conventional significance. In fact the facial expressions of emotional sentiments described in the

Natyasastra are "universal", according to the research results of a study carried out by some American psychologists in Indian and North American test groups (Hejmadi/Davidson/ Rozin, 2000). However, the imagery connected with the hand postures is composed of semiotic creations. Courtly traditions of Javanese dance as studied by Felicia Hughes Freeland (1991, 1997a, 1997b, 2008), or the Katakali complex of Kerela in India by Phillip Zarilli (2000), are examples of dance/drama traditions that have developed this language of gesture into one of great complexity.

Kersenbom-Story (1995) who is a specialist on South Indian temple dance, emphasises that Indian dance follows a tripartite structure and involves creations of word, image, and sound. In the "Tovil system", the aspect of word – and consequently image – is not developed into a distinguished posture system of symbolic denotation. Ritual texts nonetheless form the basis for the "Tovil system", but texts are narrated through speech and song, and to a very limited degree are mediated through bodily gestures. The dance items of the system nonetheless are gestures of signification, particularly gestures of honour. The repertoire includes a series of hand gestures and bodily poses greeting personified supernaturals. There are special dance acts created in honour of particular gods, a category of dances called "saudama" and there is a great "standardised" repertoire in regard to dance acts employed in relation with the just as "standardised" offerings. The basic movement patterns of the system are distinct, complex and fast, and are charged with expressive and in some translations violent, "masculine" energy and "mimic" the dance style of the god Shiva. The category of the dance of Shiva is tando which is different from the feminine aspect of dance, lake, the dance inspired by the dance of the god Shiva's consort Paravati.

Some mimetic actions of the systems, for instance the many gestures of giving away substantial pollution caused by the Yakku's "disti" and the binding of "disti" in the curing rites, work on the imagery of proposed ritual effects. There is however a great repertoire of (mask) dance-acts through which the ritualists manifest by means of performance the mode of existence of the supernaturals they are engaged with. Each of these characters is played out with distinct movement patterns and personality traits. The mask dance postures of the system are not described in the Natyasastra, which is plausible since the mask dance

developed much later in the medieval period along with the Tantric cults[20], but many of the basic dance figures are described. In some acts, the ritualists embody the powers of the supernaturals directly in trance like states – how to get into such states is not mentioned in the text. The Aduras nonetheless get into the state by dancing – embodying – distinctive movement patterns.

The script of the dramatic acts of the midnight watch in the Rata Yakuma is the point where the Rata Yakuma rite differs from any other rite of the system, and this makes it stand out as more explicitly influenced by the dance/drama tradition of the Natyasastra text. Other dramatic performances such as the "shooting of the mango" act of the Gammaduva (Obeyesekere, 1984) are more or less "standardised improvisations" on the epic narrative of Pattini's birth from a Mango, but do not follow a textual script for dramatic action. The script for the "Riddi Bishavas' toilet act", follows much of the advice given in the Natyasastra on costumes and makeup, and I suggest that the act in fact is an improvisation on the Natyasastra manual for role preparations. The act also includes the offering of "mudras" – choreographed hand postures as described in the manual. However, the "spinning of the cotton act" and "the nursing of the child act" are independent creations in regard to the Natyasastra text as such. However, the degree to which the Aduras mime the actions of the plot are richer in detail than any other dance/drama performance of the system.

As the Tovils are rituals – dance and drumming are the main aesthetic practices of the system – there are many sections of the Natyasastra which are not important for Tovil work. One is the manual for the preparation of the play-house; another is the descriptions of music. The Aduras are not actors in a dance/drama vein, but dancers and ritualists. The elaborate descriptions of the standardised features of various sentiments and the portrayal of dramatic characters are therefore not of importance for their dramaturgical method. The descriptions of dance are wasted and to my knowledge many, but far from all of the postures, mudras, swirls and styles are employed in "Tovil dance". However, that there is a connection between the dances described and "Tovil dance" I do not question. The

[20] In Geoffrey Samuels; The origins of Yoga and Tantra, 2008

principle of purification and protection of the dancers, the audience, and the dance venue are taken on by the "Tovil system". The dancers in particular have to have the permission of the gods to dance, and in the Natyasastra it is stated that if they do not they will be punished with a low birth in their next life. The cosmography of the supernaturals is taken into consideration when creating the dance venue of the dance/drama described in the text as well as in a Tovil ritual. The sky direction of Maroa – the demon of death – is north in the "Tovil system", and in the Natyasastra this sky direction is connected with the Yaka Kuvera (Vesamuni) and the Yakkus in general. One of the characters described in the Natyasastra is the woman of a yaksa type. As Riddi is a woman of a Yaksa type she can, according to the text, be presented as follows: "She sweats during sleep, loves quiet rest in bed or in a seat, is very intelligent, fearless, fond of wine, sweet smells and meat, takes delight on seeing the beloved one after a long time, feels gratitude and can be without sleep for a long time (1950: 456). In other words, she is smart but lazy – she drinks and eats flesh – impure substances – and has (ever) lasting sexual energy.

5.2.7 Rata Yakuma Aesthetics

The aesthetic features of Tovil work are not only restricted to the visual and auditive faculty but also create a multi-sensorial experience. The audience feels the heat of the fire, feels the vibrations of the drum beats, smells the dumalla smoke and the offerings, the patient is repeatedly touched and touches the body throughout the rite and everyone gets a taste of the sweet traditional snack menu served at ritual venues. The "air" is tinctured by the series of "bhavas" performed by the Aduras, but also the many things to be seen, heard, felt/touched, tasted and smelled.

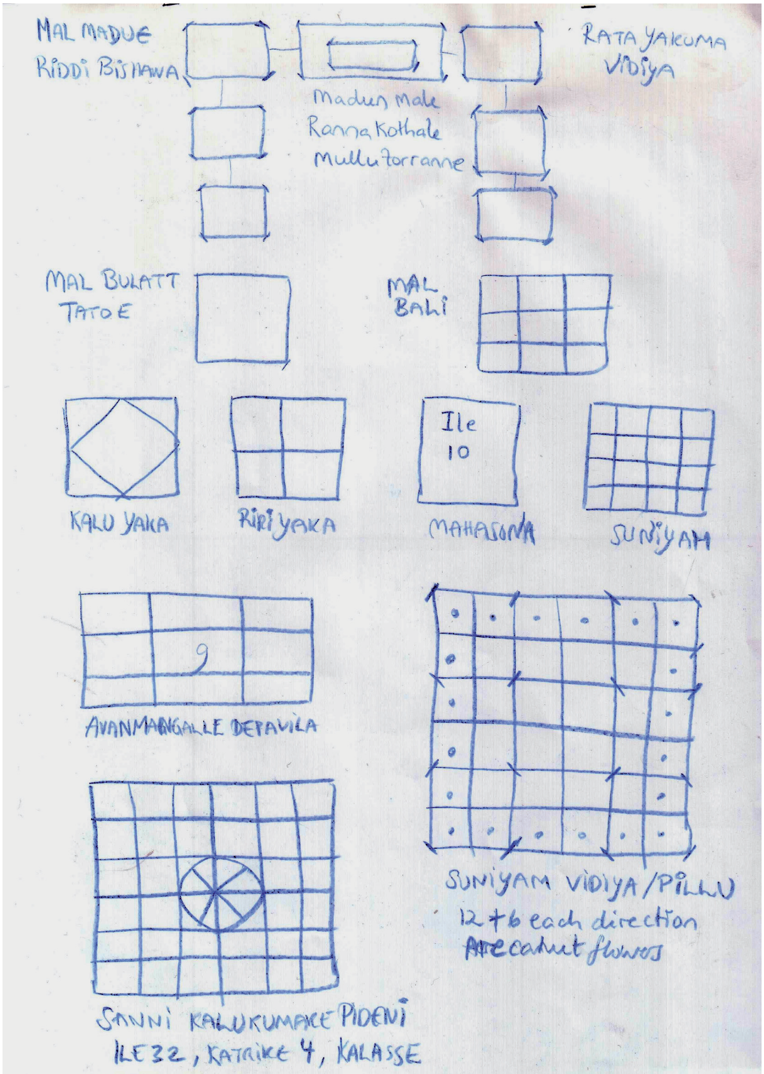
It is given in the Natyasastra that the comic sentiment has the erotic sentiment at its core. The comic sentiment has as its basis the dominant emotion of laughter, played out in six variations: slight smile, smile, gentle laughter, laughter of ridicule, vulgar laughter and excessive laughter. In his article: Sexuality and the Art of Seduction in Sinhalese Exorcism, Kapferer (2000) suggests that the key aesthetic concept employed in the Rata Yakuma is that of seduction. It is his view for instance, that the androgynous feature of the Aduras in performance is important for the ritual aesthetics. His general argument works towards the goal of revealing the existential features of the symbolic types of Kalu Kumare in particular

and also the Riddi Yaksini, and provides vivid ideas of their characters. What Kapferer here has recognised as the art of seduction, I will conceptualise as the erotic sentiment and its "second" which is the comic. In regard to the erotic sentiment, it is played out through dance and mime, the serene, elegant but flirtatious performance of the Riddi/Adura. Undoubtedly comedy is a highly important feature of the drama of the Riddi Bishawas. The very form in which the comedy is set I discovered described in the Natyasastra under the heading: "Three men's talk". "Three men's talk" depicts the moment when there is an interruption in the play by a discourse consisting mostly of irrelevant words – an "assistant" talks with the "Jester" who finds fault with this words. In the dialogues given below between the drummer and the Riddi/Adura in particular, this kind of plot with improvised punning on words dialogue structured by a core narrative breaks up the performance and creates "comic relief" situations. In other words, in the rite, Riddi is gracious feminine woman – but she is also a reckless clown.

I have seen the drama acts of the Rata Yakuma rite performed in many traditional art shows and the stage performances have influenced the development of the dialogues and mimetic actions in the Aduras' performance of these acts in general. As mentioned already, Somatilleka has during his career changed the dress of the ritual performance as he wears silk dresses for the acts instead of the ritual dress that was customary just one generation ago. Not every Adura performing this act copied him as some thought it unsuitable to perform in a woman's dress, and continued to use the basic ritual dress both for the rites and other cultural performances. The curtain put up inside the offering structure is a prop which even more distinctively defined the drama of the Riddis as a dance drama of the sort described in the Natyasastra, but again, not every Adura hangs one up inside the vidiya for "costume changes" between the three drama acts. I will get back to the notion of continuation and change in regard to the Rata Yakuma ritual performance, but first to the description of the Rata Yakuma rite.

5.3 Setting the Rata Yakuma Ritual

During the day before the rite starts, the following elements of the props are prepared:





The Riddi Yage Mandala – Celebration hall for the Riddi Sacrifice Which is also called the Mal Madue – Flower Shed, or the Rata Yakuma Vidiya.Vidiya means 'road', and denotes the passage created between the worlds of laukika at this point – it forms an "axis mundi" between the worlds of the cosmos.



Riddi Bishawas' accessories – for her toilet and for the spinning and weaving of the cloth




Avanmangalle Depavila tatoe (left). Sanni Kalu Kumare Vidiya.



Kallasse – the pot for Kalu kumare, and the "human" effigy – the chicken



Close up of an offering-basket –tatoe – food suitable for a Yaka



The Baliya, clay image of Kalu Kumare in the making

The Ritual Arena

House

Kalu Kumare Bali **Patient** **Buddha**

Kumare Vidiya

Pillu Pideni

Mal Madue

The ritual arena is very carefully constructed, and the main rule is to avoid a situation in which the supernaturals, who according to the Buddhist pantheon are superior to others, are "polluted" by the presence of the substance of more inferior beings. Knowledge about the internal order and directions of appearances is then considered to be of greatest importance. The opening of the Mal Madue/Flower shed is facing the aturea who is again seated where s/he is not facing the Maroa, the death spirit. The Maroa changes direction every weekday, but never appears from North East. The different offering baskets and stands for the different Yakku should be placed in such a way that the different offerings are not "polluted" by each other. This follows a concept of substantial purity among the Yakku, similar to that concerning their food offerings. The relationship between the Yakku and other supernaturals follows a caste hierarchy based on the principles of noble or less noble births; more correctly, how they were born and from whose womb they came, which again is associated with their more or less "dirty" nature. The lowest "caste" of Yakku should be kept in the northern directions, and the highest in the southern. If offerings are given simultaneously to supernaturals which are similar in caste, their offering baskets are placed at the same level. When the caste differs between supernaturals offered to throughout specific acts, their baskets are placed on higher or lower stands in accordance with their place in the Buddhist Pantheon.

The ritual arena is purified by charmed saffron water (kahadiyara), an act of protection against the substantial pollution caused by the Yakku's "killi" or "infected humans" "pillu", for everyone present at the rite. If asked for, the Adura also prepares an oil, 'nanomora', charmed with mantras which everyone, except for the aturea and the Aduras, apply on their forehead for protection. Various techniques provide differing degrees of protection from disti and pillu; the yantra is viewed as the most powerful, the nanomora oil as second, and then the saffron water. The Aduras for their part have to avoid the first two kinds of protection. This is because their role is that of mediating between the patients and the Yakku, and a protective oil or yantra repulses them.

The ritual arena cannot be called holy or profane. It is an arena whose designed potential is only given when the ritual performance is put into action. It is an arena which makes a "passage" from the other worlds into this world possible, but this is on a transcendental level due to the power given to the offering structures yantra design. It is in other words not "dangerous" for the audience to move around everywhere during the performance – and so they do. Obeyesekere notes for the Pattini rites: "The ritual arena is a meeting place for the three worlds… the world of material form, desire and no form], where humans interact with gods and demons." (Obeyesekere, 1984: 53). Comparably, Phillip Zarilli notes from Indian rituals; "Ritual practices are understood to establish a mediating bridge between the daily world and the 'unseen' and powerful world of the gods. The ritual specialist establishes the bridge, mediating between the tangible daily world and the intangible other world by means of his or her ritual practices". (Zarilli, 1990: 122). In other words, both stress the metaphysical features of the arena as worlds of material form and no form, or the tangible and intangible. However, Obeyesekere adds the Buddhist concept of desire to this meta-physicality. Moreover, to us, Zarrili's notion about the priest is essential. It is the priest who "activates" the mediating potential, and in the Tovils it is the Aduras who have the power to create and control mediation between beings of the worlds of this world (laukika).

5.3.1 The Songs – Kavi

Kapferer (1983) mentions 5 different kinds of kavis (songs) used during the rituals. "The Asirivada kavi, which relates aspects of the myth's relation to the demons and praises their powers and also the powers of the deities; the Ambun kavi, which tells how the offering

baskets and other ritual structures are made; the Yadini kavi, which is basically similar to the Asirivada kavi, and which tells of the ancestry and origin of the demons; the Atacona kavi, which calls the demons from the eight directions; and the Sirasapada (head to foot) kavi, which is principally curative and is sung to remove the illness from the patient." (Kapferer, 1983: 198). According to my own field material, these different categories of songs affect four different qualities of engagements of the Yakku. The first one is thought to be flattering for the Yakku to hear, the second is a description of the offerings given due to the promise the Yakku made to Buddha about giving up their influence on the patient if they receive such and such offerings. The fourth category concerns attracting the demons from every direction in the world, and finally the last one has the power to end various categories of illness caused by them. The kannalauva (summoning verses) shares the positive protective quality of set kavis- verses of blessing. Kannalauva (summoning verses) addresses supernaturals dwelling in "other worlds" and is performed with the purpose of attracting their attention. "The ritual as a public ceremony may be said to begin with the kannalauva. It states why the ceremony is being held, describes the nature of the patient's affliction, and makes a plea to the gods to come and bless the ceremony, and to the demons to act benevolently and remove the disease." (Tambiah, 1968: 177). It should be noted that kannalauva verses are frequently recited at the start of any offering act of the Tovil rite as before presenting the offering one must have attracted the supernaturals' attention.

5.3.2 The Arrow – Igaha

Igaha, is the ritual stick. The igaha, which means "arrow" in English is made of a wooden stick with an iron nail is fixed on its end. It is decorated with areca-nut flowers, and is a pointed weapon. In discussion with some Aduras they suggested that the igaha, the ritual stick used in the tovils to withdraw illness from the patient's body, has "antimagnetic powers". The principle is that of two antimagnetic poles with a negative, repulsive relationship. The demons are repelled by iron, and with the Igaha the Adura thus control "disti" by magnetic force. In general it is good advice to leave an iron-nail in places were one prepares oils to be used for ritual protection. According to the myth of origin of the Igaha, the god Iswara (Shiva) made the first one; he gave it to Ganesa, Ganesa gave it to Katarangama and Katarangama gave it to the Adura. On images of Katarangama one can see that the igaha is his weapon, and today the powers of the igaha are associated with him. In

the myth that Hugh Nevill (1955.2: 10) presents, the potential of the igaha, which originated from the first sorcery ritual (Suniyama) is described thus; "dispelling evil from the arrow, long life was ever extended". Throughout the rituals the igaha actualises various potentials, and has a great number of functions to fulfil. In principle, the Aduras as well as the patients are protected by the igaha, and if the patient takes a short break from the ritual arena during the rite, s/he brings the igaha for protection.

By giving a mantra to the igaha the Aduras can lead the patient in demon trance (avesa) and control the direction of the dancing. For the Adura the igaha both protects him against disti, and helps him control the patient infested with the impurity caused by disti/pillu. The Adura charms the igaha with mantras, and these specific mantras are addressing a rakse, a kind of demon that is regarded as more powerful than Yaka, and therefore has the power to control the Yaka. After the ritual offerings are finished, and the Yakku's disti/pillu bound to these, the Aduras take the offering baskets to the porale (graveyard). By drawing three lines on the ground underneath the offering baskets with the igaha, the pillu – the pollutive substance that is caused by the Yakku – is bound to this place.

During the performance of sirisipade (the head to toe verses), the igaha is used to withdraw the illness from the different parts of the body. The Adura then points to the bodily parts mentioned in the text of the sirisipade and "leads" the “disti” out of these parts. There are also special igaha steps performed after the sirisipade in order to end the illnesses caused by the Yakku. The igaha is one of the most essential objects used by the Aduras because of its powerful potential and its flexible functions. The igaha controls, withdraws, moves and binds “disti”, which are all essential actions used in order used to “purify” the body of the patient from “disti”.

5.3.3 The Pipe – Vasdanda

Lastly, I will mention the Vasdanda, the pipe, of which the origin is unknown to me. The demon pipe makes a whining sound. Its purpose is to attract the Yakku's attention to the rite, since its sound travels to where the Yakku are living. One Adura explained that the demon pipe “breathes life” into the charms and texts recited.

5.4 Hende Samayama – The Evening Watch

The day ends, the sun goes down, and the evening watch of the ritual is about to begin. The Aduras dress up in the ceremonial dress for the evening watch: the crown, coat, white skirt cloth, belt, jingles and the necklace.



The Adura Tillekeratna singing the song about the origin of the mat.
The Igaha, the arrow is held in Tillekeratne's right hand

5.4.1 Preliminary Acts of Protection (against pillu)

The patient is asked to come to the "bed". She comes out of the house with an oil lamp (Buddhist symbol) and the igaha (the arrow with an iron spike) which she keeps with her whenever she moves around during the ritual for protection. The Aduras makes a "pudjava" (offering) for the patient – and "breathes life into it" with intonating prayers the "mal tatoe" – flower basket. The flower basket contains "pure" offerings to be used throughout the night, such as rice, betel-leaves, flowers, light wicks, oil for the lamps, and coins. The Maha-Chari, master of the ritual, summons the gods and the triple gem of Buddhism. The aturea is then covered behind a white cloth held by two young boys.



The pillu vidiya – Suniyam vidiya

5.4.2 Invocation of the Offering Structure (vidiya) to Suniyam the Sorcery Demon

The Maha Chari is invoking the Vidiya – asking Suniyam and the guardian gods to protect this ritual, and the people present against "pillu", which is substantial impurity caused by "disti" and "vas dos". Meanwhile one of the Aduras prepares the uduyang sallue (top cloth) – a white cloth which will be offered to Riddi Yaksini – to be put in the roof of the vidiya (offering structure) by chanting mantras over it for each fold that he makes, and then knots the cloth piece together. A verse suitable for this purpose, but just one of many recited throughout the Suniyam vidiya "kepekerime" act is:

Om namo, in the black cloud, in the nilekote rock, in the manil lake, six million princes being chief for them, with a keen eye and memory, Vesamuni avatara disti, from that maha kaluvalla rock.
Kaluwalla on top of the rock, waterfall and in that dangerous mountain top in the manil lake
the Mahakalu raksaya and (Riddi) yaksini place, take my offering and bring your disti
as I am calling through speech

To prevent possible obstacles caused by disti the offering baskets used throughout the ritual are kept near to the pillu pideni or Suniyam Vidiya. In the morning all offerings are taken to the graveyard, or another already highly impure place. The Mantra Chari finishes the invocation of the Suniyam Vidiya act by tying three knots on one of the decorative leaves. Now the rite, the people, and the patient should be protected throughout the night. The Aduras in their ritual dress enter the Vidiya and ask Suniyam to protect the patient, ritualists, and the ritual from pillu (impurity caused by distiya (killi transferred through the malevolent glance of the Yakku) or vas dos (sorcery).



5.4.3 The Removal of the White Cloth Act

The Mantra Chari then moves over to the patient, in front of whom the offering baskets have been placed, although the patient is still covered behind a white cloth. Two young male assistants from the village, believed to be too pure to risk any danger caused by pillu or vas dos, hold the white cloth that covers the patient. The tatoes (offering stands) are lit up with small torches and dumalla (incense smoke) is wafted over them. The MC chants dumalla while holding the igaha (arrow) on his shoulder and a torch in his hand. He then throws dumalla on the cloth three times and the boys drop the cloth. It was explained to me that the space between the patient and the ranga mangalle, the dance arena, is purified by these acts and the aturea is provided with a "clear view" for the night.



The patient, her family and friends during the "evening watch"

5.4.4 Hende Pideni – A Preliminary Offering to Kalu Yaka, Riddi Yakseniyante and Kalu Kumare

The evening offering sequences start with a preliminary offering to Kalu Yaka, Riddi Yaksini and Kalu Kumare. Then the Mantra Chari summons the Yakas believed to accompany Kalu Kumare in the case of the aturea's illness, Riri Yaka, Bille Yaka and Suniyam Yaka. The following ritual procedures seek the ends of purification and transaction by the means of offerings and mimetic acts of bodily purification of "pillu". The Maha-Chari calls upon the Yakas in order to get their attention, and then pleads with them. (See Larsen 1998 or Kapferer 1983 for descriptions of the procedures).



From the patients view: Adura Damikk singing and dancing at the evening offering watch

5.4.5 The Grand Offering to Kalu Kumare

THE SONG OF ORIGIN OF KALU KUMARE

When Kakusande Buddha was doing good to the world in Sri Lanka
a king was ruling the country.
The king was ruling well at that time ,
and by the cruelty of destiny the queen had the craving for a baby.

On that day the queen craved wearing black flowers,
and she went to the king and asked him to bring the flowers immediately.
The king went to that particular lake and saw the black flowers
He picked the stamens, and gave them to the queen.
When the queen held them in her hands, she simultaneously felt her conception.
She kissed the flowers, and was very happy

After seven months, through anger and revenge against the king,
those lotus flowers started blooming one after the other.
For six months, breaking all rocks and stones on the tops of rocks,
making many disturbancesKalu Kumare was threatening and in anger he made the announcement that he was going to kill the king

On the following morning the people in town were questioned by the king on this matter
The people said that they had done nothing wrong against the king or the queen

The king became very angry and threatened the prince with his sword in hand
Asking and chasing the prince, both ran out into the water and the prince died

The cruel avetara as Kalu Kumare was born with the intention of killing infants

We are going to bring the birth of this Kalu Kumare to the people in Sri Lanka in the kavi to follow
From there Kalu Kumare pella paliya (procession)
and the decorations for the Pella paliya have to be made like this.

In the big black pond you find seven small ponds in the middle,
and on the big black rock in the middle, you find the black blue flower on top,
and in the middle of the power, in the reno, this queen (who gave birth to him) resides.
Kalu Kumare was born in that mal reno ("flower shed").

In the womb of Queen Suddhu Ranmoto Male Kalu Kumare was conceived.
This queen was known as Lude Wadewane Kale Rakshih.
She was playing here and there with Prince Siddhe Wadewane Oddi.
Through the power of Siddhe asking Kalu Kumarea to protect the patient

When the child was 7 months old he was given a good curry meal,
during that age he was given two women to look after him,
allowing the prince to have ellu, goat, and cock as billi as he wished,
and sometimes certain evil feelings arose (goratara rakusu) in him.

He went to Jama radjo, and got permission
there was a woman in the human world like burning flames with certain amount of anger and threatening feelings
and he received permission from Jama radjo and went into that lady's womb intending to kill the unborn inside.

Here I am giving all these offerings to you and please see that you take away all the pains in the aturea.
Now here we have made kukulu narra billi (symoblic offering of a cock) to this maha pideni on the east side of the vidiya.
Adura is paying all these things to the colourfully made baliya.
And please bring this aturea to the middle of the vidiya with your avesa.

We have made a kiri batt (milk rice) with tambili water (coconut milk),
and you will find flesh, specially fried and with pasgorasse (gee, curd, honni etc).
You, eating this golden coloured kukula billa while spreading blood everywhere (dripping from the mouth),
please take this offering and take away all ailments from the aturea.

Having this manil pokone, pond, on the top of the stony rock,
and having some satisfaction and also living in the black manil flower,
getting powers of the god of the sun, and causing all diseases to this infant
and doing all these things to the world you as Kalu Kumare

The devata who has ruling power over Sri Lanka
as Kalu Kumare you hold the human beings and make them fear and make them mad, into lunatics,
and taking all offerings (pudepanduru) as you feel,
you have taken all the powers and opportunity from your teachers (Guruarunge)

Since then you have suffered so badly from the revenge of Vesamuni Radjo roaming in Sri Lanka,
getting further permission to kill all the infants of human beings, you Prince Kalu Kumrae devata
You are in Sri Lanka with all your privileges, please accept this pude dolle (offerings).
You have got the power to kill the infants,
and you are on earth and we are making a plea to you Kalu Kumarea.

You Kalu Kumare devata taking an oath of power to kill these infants
you are in places where women bathe and women come and go,
and you have a very good look at them and you make them sick.

Born in the womb of Suddu ranmoto male bishava (white gem flower queen),
Over the seven seas over there in a black stony cave/place,
I am also obtaining permission from King Vesamuni.
Looking at the infants everywhere I make them sick.

Satare Karadiya Wallale (in the sea water), from there you can see us,
and also from the place where Katarangama holds the pandam in hand.
Just as a black cloud your power is known to us,
Kalu Kumarea, please end the ailments of the aturea.

From the head, forehead, two eyes, two ears and from the mouth,
and from the tongue and upper jaw, neck, two shoulders, two hands and two elbows, two wrists, ten fingers, nails, if you have any (indre agnie) powerful vision

The hips, back, and all that pains and also the pain in the chest,
and the breast, stomach, navel, the thighs, the genitals,
and also the two knees, limbs, ankles,
and the pains in all these places also cure. (hisse depatule: from head – to feet);

Any diseases you find in the ten fingers and feet,
the burning sensation, the trembling and madness, nonsense speech,
and in dreams seeing black block carts,
and frightening the sick people, please give them release from these illnesses

The sickness that is there from head to toe,
and having seen Kalu Kumarea disti with the blessings of Vesamuni,
and sattevaranam (the four guardian deities),
and all the diseases that they have got from the eight corners, let them go to the sixteen corners (sollos cona)

The end

After each verse the Aduras perform a short dance of salutation to Kalu Kumare. The offering sequence is completed with a sirisipade, a verse influenced by the atharva veda, the veda on magical religious healing. In this veda there are verses describing how the illness-causing demon is commanded to "fly away" and also describing the purification of the body from head to toe – joint by joint**.** While reciting the sirisipade verses the Adura moves the igaha (arrow) between the joints of the patient's body and touches the cock, as if transferring the "pillu" to it. The cock is the human effigy and throughout the whole night it acts as a "pillu container". When the song is finished the cock is finally circled three times above the head of the patient.

The story about Kalu Kumare is highly informative. First we learn about the pregnancy cravings which women are subjected to. Secondly the intercourse between his royal mother and father was a "blooming" one as his father plucks the stamen of the black flower and at

the very moment he gives it to his queen, she conceives a child. However, that the queen craved for a flower that was black is a sign of misfortune. As the child grows up he shows great temper and anger. The word spreads that he is about to kill his father. His father hears about it and sets out to hunt down his son. The king chases him into a pond where he drowns. The prince is reborn as Kalu Kumare, the black prince, a Yaka that craves foetuses. Moreover, the song tells what sorts of offerings he needs in order to give up his influence on women. The offering basket made by the Adura (tatoe) forms a cosmography of the world of Kalu Kumare, the elements related to his birth, like the black flower (the flowerbed where his mother queen resides and he was born) which is placed on the rock in the centre of the seven ponds in the great black lake etc, as well as the offerings required to break his influence on the patient. Through the song Kalu Kumare is reminded about his status in the cosmic hierarchy, and of those who are superior to him and whose authority he must obey, such as Vesamuni who rules this world under the jurisdiction of Buddha and the superior Sun god. In the offering act the Adura speaks flattering words about the cruel powers of Kalu Kumare, and asks him to give up his interest in the patient – to accept the offerings given as a substitute. The Sirisipade provides information about the signs and symptoms of the multiple illnesses he causes, and reveals that he appears as a black cloud. It is then time to plead with Kalu Kumare and the following song is suitable for this ritual purpose. The grand offering to Kalu Kumare in this rite, apart from the offering of his Bali -the clay image portraying him at the very end, is the offering of the golden jar by the aturea to Kalu Kumare.

KALU KUMARE KALASSE (JAR) SONG

"Here I am offering you a golden jar full of beautiful flowers,
and in it you find sickness that is brought Kalu Kumare.
Please come and take a seat on it, please accept this presentation.

Rahu the planet is here and with seven torches,
and you find fire, please have a look at this golden jar.
Who likes sexual satisfaction
and just because you have put you're glance on the normal man kind on earth
when you have seen the beautiful women,
and you have come to this particular lady

You have come in dreams to these women and sleep with them
Holding, please come and hold with the neck and destroy it

In this way when the Yakas do things they call for these Aduras
and then they offer all these things in this jar to you Kalu Kumare

Then making all necessary verses, stanzas made by Aduras,
please accept it and may the prince come here

Making definitions and descriptions of Lord Buddha we have made all offering baskets circular
Paying respect for devatava we worship you all with Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha

According to the available resources in the village we have made the necessary offering baskets
and having given birth through gettebahu, the King Bambadatt, you were called for Solipure (a place in India),

Having taken 20 000 people and with beautiful maids you put youre glance on them
You want this place named Kalu Kumrae,
please do come to this pun kalasse and be with us

Always you are satisfied with the women and encircling them you always cheat the Adura,
and always stay there, and you always destroy the babies, and you are Gadjabahs Kalu Kumare

In the water and the sea you divided everything and went to the other side,
and you had different names and they are victims subjectged to your revenge on women
please cure these illnesses and give birth to this kalasse

The power of disti that you have Kalu Kumare,
just like the moonlight we get through the jungle,
having taken all that we have offered, please, Kalu Kumare, do come over here

We have made up seats for you
and you have been taken under Vishnu
and do not leave
and please come and be in this Kaslasse

Taking the varanan (authorisation) of Vesamuni King,
and to come to this Dammadjutalle (place in India),
and getting hold of all the dangerous devils
please come to this Kalasse

With the help of Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha
and with the black coat over you,
with the good dance, the Yak Adura is there,
please come on to this kalasse

There is a tradition from the very past that we do not always see the good but the bad,
we know what dangerous things the Kalu Kumare did

Please do not resent any mistake of mine,
do not go against the Dhammam and be kind to us
please come on to this kallasse

Married during the young age
and no one was sent back from him,
because of the faith I have in you,
please come to be in the kalasse, it is yours

There is no one else as my husband other than you, Kalu Kumare
enjoy holding my breast,
and come and be close to me and enjoy with me as you want prince

I cannot be alone in this bed,
love me and be with me,
and if you come and give me satisfaction today in this place,
come to me and be in this kalasse

And having been infected with love I am in pain
and give me a good chance and be with me in this house

And there is a bed with flowers right round in the right pattern
and to hit this Kalu Kumae will come.
And do not be annoyed having heard the Buddhu guna (kindness and good deeds of Buddha)
the Kalu Kumarea is coming towards me

Having heard of this kindness and goodness of Lord Buddha
and understanding all about Buddha,
and on behalf of that please protect this patient
and be on this kalasse

In this Samayama we are playing with all smells and with all garlands made of flowers,
all diseases that we have should be removed by you
and samakumare please come on to this kalasse

With the powers of Saman and Pattini
and with the happiness of whatever the diseases that this patient has,
threatening the devil, listening to all these verses while seated on this Kalasse

This Kumare stayed in the middle of the ocean and dissipated all this satisfaction
but having gone there you became angry because the women were protected
and having gone out from the water you went into a land where you found a lot of women

In that land there were maids who had not heard words of seduction (or??)
when they heard his words, and through the desire like the flower buds
they started dangling their breasts and dancing ,
they ran and hugged and embraced this Kumarea

Then the young and old maid women who were impatient
they ran towards him and quarrelled among themselves in order to hold him
and from all sides they started licking and sucking this man
and in this big fight this Kumarea died and he was born again to revenge himself on women

That day when all the women as lunatics ran towards this Kumarea because of their love to him
and they held him and started to touch the whole body, he died and was born vowing revenge towards women

From that time that he had revenge on the women
He had full authority from Vesamuni Yaka
and he came down to earth where you find human beings
and he always made all the women lose their mind

He is making a plate of rice and offering this to Kumarea
and giving him a reminder that this is what I am making
in order to get rid of diseases that you have given to all these sick people

This type of kindness, qualities, if you have with you we have made this vidiya with all the necessary beautiful flowers
and on that condition if you have any love for this sick person please leave the sick person alone

Having made beautiful lamps with flowers,
open your eyes and see you are the person who gives all diseases to infants,
and if you have any doubts please forget them and keep all these people free

Do you not have any other beautiful women elsewhere in the country
and do you not feel it odd to be with women like this.
You will not be able to be here now because of the blessings of Lord Buddha,
and I give you permission to go away, leave this patient.

The end



The aturea in procession with the "golden jar" over her head

The patient rises up, the Adura gives her the kalasse – golden jar, which in reality is a new cooking pot, and she lifts the basket with it above her head. Four men come to her assistance and lift up the uduvidiyang, which literarily means the cloth above or ceiling cloth, which here symbolises the protective powers of Pattini. With the Mantra man in the lead cleansing the pathway from the patient's bed to the Kalu Kumare vidiya with fire blows of *dumalla* (resin), they follow in a fine procession. The procession walks three times around the whole arena, then three times around the Suniyam Vidiya and finally stops by the Kalu Kumare vidiya. The patient then places her offerings of betel-leaves, coins, and areca-nut flowers into the pot, wipes her face three times with her hand and gives the "pillu" to the pot. The Adura lifts the pot and puts it on top of the vidiya. He then puts one torch in each corner of the Kalu Kumare vidiya, wafts dumalla smoke over the stand while he chants over some incense that he holds in his hand and finally throws it on a torch and directs a fire blow onto the stand. The MC then dances the "closing" steps of greetings to Kalu Kumare with a torch in his hand. Finally he charms a "gokkole leaf" and ties one knot on the Kalu Kumare vidiya – the final binding of disti (glance) with the last two knots will be done at the churchyard where all offerings are placed at the end of the rite.

Through the verses sung throughout this act, the Adura invites Kalu Kumarea to direct his attention "disti" onto the Kalasse. The fire torch on the top of the kalasse lights up the pathway. Kalu Kumare is then asked to obey the word of the Aduras, to accept the offerings, to obey the power of the triple gem. He is reminded about how he appears in the dreams of women – that he make them ill and is asked to please come to the kalasse. Then the Adura seduces Kalu kumara as he claims to long for him – waits for him in the flowerbed of the kalasse, saying that he seeks nothing but his satisfaction. And when tricked into the kalasse, he is again reminded that he has to obey the powers of Buddha, the Pattini goddess and the god Saman. Kalu Kumare is flattered for his irresistible sex-appeal and reminded of how thousands of women "sucked" his "life force" out of his body and that in revenge for his death, and by the authorisation given by Vesamuni, the chief of the Yakas, he hunts down women and makes them sick. Finally the Adura, due to his authorisation to do so, orders Kalu Kumare to leave the patient.

Some Aduras do a "dekanu villakku" offering as a conclusion of this act. In such an offering act, the Adura puts a double torch in his mouth, works himself into trance and hunts the "black cloud" of Kalu Kumare around the house of the aturea and down to the churchyard accompanied by a furious drum orchestra. The double-sided torch placed in his mouth lights up his way. However, that is not the procedure of this particular rite.

5.4.6 Finalisation of the Evening Watch Offerings to Riri Yaka, Bille Yaka, Suniyam Yaka

The offering sequence is finalised with a asirivade song (song of blessing) followed by a sirisipade, head to foot verse where the "disti" is removed from the patient's body and placed into the offering baskets, "pillu" purified and "bound" to it. When done, the Maha-Chari makes the offering of flowers and betel-leaves to the Riddi Bishawas, an act that follows a similar closing procedure as described above in the offering of the golden jar – kalasse act. The patient is wished "long life" by the Aduras and her relatives. This gesture is in fact performed occasionally throughout the night and is an important closure of any ritual procedure. If "ghosts" (pretea) have an agency in the patient's illness, the Preta Pideni offering is hereby finished with similar ritual actions.

A SONG OF BUDDHIST BLESSING TO THE ATUREA

Seated under the Sri Maha bodi, to get enlightenment we made pudja with namo,
with that, all the beings on earth were given blessings.
Even the elephant called Giri, worshipped
and with that announcement let everything go well and be good.

When our bosat was born as the chief of Yakku in the Yakas clan
Hundreds of thousands of devils worshipped at your feet and all the yakku ran away from you.
With the announcement of tasse, let everything become good.

In this endless life circle Sassere, the King Siri Sangha Bo was born
and with his sword he cut his head and offered to accept the Buddhahood in future.
Remembering this incident in the past and worshipping all the Devi at the feet of bhagavato,
the word used will make all the blessings good.

When in the past Bosat was born as a parrot,

and with five hundred birds flew to the king's paddy field and destroyed all the crops.

With the word arahatto the King Surre worshipped at the foot of Lord Buddha.

Let the word arrahattå bring all happiness and blessings to the people.

"Samma Sambuddhe" the blessings of Buddha which helped to get rid of the beach called Galle (rock).

And with Samma Sambuddhe Maha Brakma worshipped Buddha

and with the announcement of Samma Sambuddhe let everything go well .

When the arrows were hidden in the clouds when they were completed at the kings command.

Thousands of kings looked at them and a Buddhasse (blessing) was spoken by the Lord Buddha.

So with the announcement of this Buddhasse let everything happen well.

The end

5.4.7 The Preparation of the Mat

The song is recited before each single "Depavila" act of the "Tovil system". This is the start:

THE SONG ABOUT THE MAT (PADDURE)

Where is the lake where you can see the sun and the moon.

And this is the place where you can see the sun and the moon.

The beautiful women making mats and for me also give straws

Taking them as a bunch and cutting the two edges and flattening the pieces on both sides.

And starting to weave on the mat on one of the four corners weaving the mat from this corner

With a nice smile showing the teeth and with affection to the husband

The women are cutting these straws in the lake. I will also accompany them to cut.

After seven months the infant was born with a beautiful skin on the body.

I was demanded by my husband not to go to the lake or the field to cut those things

In that case I will have a miscarriage

Den denne denna denne denne denne….



Adura preparing the mat for the "human effigy trick"

The Adura dances around and purifies the place, and secures it by drawing thee lines of protection on the ground beneath the mat, purifying each corner with "dumalla" and fire. During the act, the Adura amuses the audience by threatening the "assistant", who is holding the incense pot, with his torches and chases him around.

5.4.8 Depawila, Avanmangala Riri Yaka

The Mantraman then lies down and gets the offering basket with nine "iles", offering plates on top of his belly. He holds his arrow in one hand and the whistle in another, the cock by his feet. But first, the aturea raises a red cloth three times over her head and gives it to the Adura who puts it on top of his body. The patient moreover puts offerings in the "iles" – flowers, broken betel leaves and coins – and gives her "disti" to each of the offerings before she hands it over to the Mantra man who puts them into the iles. The Adura chants the mantras quietly, and in some rituals the "assistants" make fun of the event and act as if they were at a real funeral and express their grief and sorrow, to the great amusement of the audience present.



The Adura transfers "disti" from the patient to the basket/himself with the igaha – and craftily transfers it over to the effigy cock that is lying by his feet. The Yakku are believed to be too unintelligent to notice the difference between the patient and the cock.

In a Rata Yakuma ritual a woman went mad when they started singing the Riri Yaka dikavi, the story of origin of Riri Yaka of the depavila (symbolic human sacrifice) act. The patient had obviously a very tense relationship both to her in-laws and to her husband and when this happened one of the 13 women of the household (sisters and sister in laws) got "avesa" – fell into trance – but she was taken away from the ritual venue and received temporary treatment from the Aduras and later had a rite of her own. Village gossips that I spoke with characterised the family as "greedy" and "jealous", and said that the women of this family had regularly been subjected to misfortune of supernatural agency. The patient was a woman in her early twenties who came from and lived in Colombo, but her husband's village was Weligama. The patient had trouble getting pregnant after her marriage and they had figured out that it was due to the influence of Kalu Kumare.

The patient had acted quite normally up to this act and showed herself as a sweet mother, caressing and moving her child gently on her lap. But after the offering she suddenly slipped into a wicked mood and started yelling at her husband and at her aunts. The patient had gone "mad" (pissue wella) and started to shout:

aturea: "You devils you do not treat women well, and the men are telling lies. I am not lying you devil (referring to the crowd present). She says that she cannot bear (her sorrow), when she (the baby) is crying. She is crying so much. Why do you do that? Oh, please take care of her, I cannot do it myself. (She uses much stronger words than the translator wishes to express). She is my life. You devil, why do you do all these bad things? No, I want to get out of this body. Where is that white one? Did you all see him coming in a van? Tell him to bring the van, bring it here so that I can go on it. We brought the van (says someone present) Do not lie you ###. Do not lie you devils, you men always lie. Oh, my son who is in Kandy… no, no, do not… Just cut this and finish this now. Please bring that Adura, she will die if you do not do something she will die soon. (Everyone ask her to sit down). No, no I cannot leave her. Look here, he is holding onto me. Please help my daughter. Why the hell are you squeezing my stomach? I cannot go; if I shut up she will die. Ask that white person to come, (suddu eka) Suddu Adura, where is this Suddu Adura? You woman, she called me and told me about a suddu Adura in Kandy. That "viper" that was just standing here, just now. His brother, tell him to bring that Adura… Let us finish this and then we will go to Kandy. No, no we will not be able to go to Kandy, she will die on the way. Till you bring that Adura, I cannot go. (Someone says that all the Aduras are the same.)"

The situation was critical and they took the child away from the mother, and continued the procedures of the ritual cure.

When the Adura is done with his charms, the cock gets the final "disti" from the patient and enclosing ritual acts of "purification" and "binding" of the "disti" are carried out.



The aturea gives "pillu/disti" to the cock



and Amaradiva does the final "dumalla" fuming of this act

The evening watch is finished by these acts. The Yakku influencing the aturea's illness, Kalu Kumare in particular, have been summoned, offered to, and their "disti" bound. In the midnight watch to follow, the offerings centre around the Riddi Bishawas.

5.5 Rata Yakuma Samayama – Riddi Yage Natime

5.5.1 The Offerings From the Seven Paliyas – for Protection of the Ritual and the Flower Shed

The seven Paliyas means both a procession of seven offerings and seven "messangers" bringing seven items items which represent the powers of seven different gods. These items are incense/dumalla, an earth pot, a coconut, a white cloth, a betel-leaf, a feather from the cock, water and torches. This offering act is a normal procedure in all of the Tovil rites that I watched. The songs of origin of each of the items and their godly descent are given in the texts "belonging" to and recited in their full versions in the Suniyama rite as the story has it that they were created for the first Suniyama rite, a rite that served the purpose of curing the queen Malikpala of the first righteous king Mahasammata. The Yak Tovil rites are impure, so the gods do not come themselves, but send the "paliyas" with the objects which represent their powers for good, for protection. In this ritual the offering of the Pandam – a torch and the Sallue – cloth is subjected to extensive creative elaboration.

The first paliya is **Pandam paliya**, who received his two pandams (torches) from Devol Deva. Devol Deva is the god who controls fire, and a god whose power is indexical with pandams (torches). Devol Deva is superior to the Yaka and the torches provided by him are thus empowered to cure patients.

Sallue paliya brings a cloth (sallue) from the goddess Pattini. My informants referred to the curing powers of the goddess Pattini as that of healing every sort of sickness (dosa), skin-diseases, bodily humour diseases (tundos), jealous thoughts or looks (sorcery) as well as "yaksedosa".

Kendy paliya brings the water from a sacred pond in India called Anontotavilla. The original potential of the water is transmuted into the saffron water (kahadiyara), which the Kendy paliya brings. The saffron water contains water from five different sources: a well, river, sea, rain and moisture. Supplemented with saffron, sandon (sandalwood-paste), coconut-milk and rosewater and thereafter charmed with mantras, this water gains a protective and purifying power. The Kendy paliya is ordered to sprinkle the water over the

aturea to cure him/her. The saffron water will help to end all sorts of diseases prevailing among humans. The saffron water, charmed with mantra, is used for various reasons throughout the ritual. For instance, it protects the audience from getting disti or from neing polluted by the "pillu" of the patient – and is sprinkled on the ritual ground before the ritual begins. Further, it helps people who have avesa (demon-trance states), to regain their consciousness. The water is sprinkled on the patients (three times) after every offering act in order to purify their bodies from pillu.

Kalas paliya has received a pot of soil (pund kallas). Kalas paliya is the earth goddess (Polova mahi kantava) herself disguised as this figure. Somatillaka explained that: "this soil is not like ordinary soil, but has powers to cure". Just as with fire, wind and water, the element earth is represented also.

Tambili paliya brings the coconut as a gift from the god Ganesa (Gana deva). The Tambili is a king coconut. Tambili paliya came to the human world to spread diseases, but Ganesa forbade him to do so, and he, together with his mother/father Shiva[21] and his brother Katarangama presented this coconut to Tambili paliya. They forbade him to bring disease and ordered him to bring cures to patients instead.

Dallumoro palyia comes from the Naga world; he has received the bulat (betel leaf) from the Naga king and is sent to the world to cure sick people. The myth recounted in Hugh Nevill (1955 Section2:96) tells that the Naga king took some betel leaves from the "first king" Maha Sammata and Manikpala's wedding, and planted them in the Naga world. These betel-leaves were presented as a wedding gift by the god Sakra, the protective god of Buddhism in the Lankan pantheon[22]. The betel leaf is used as an offering during the rituals, and to break a leaf into two pieces is parallel to breaking the connection between Yaka and patient, similar to breaking any curse (sorcery). In other words betel leaves contain a purifying potential.

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[21] One *Adura* explained to me that, because of the Buddhist ideals stating that higher persons or beings should abstain from sexual pleasures, many Hindu gods worshipped in Sri Lanka have "lost their wives", and in the case of Shiva this has made him into both the mother and father of *Ganesa* and Katarangama.

[22] God Sakra received a warrant from Lord Buddha to protect Sri Lanka. (Scott 1993).

Anguru-dumalla paliya comes to the ritual with dumalla (resin). This figure is called a Yaka, and he has done many bad deeds. Once he was on top of a rock called Kalesondegala[23]. He charmed dumalla, put it into a bowl and then set it on fire. Its incense produced a beautiful smell which filled the world. Dumalla fills the air, and where air ends, there is ether and therefore dumalla represents both elements. The smell contains purifying potential, and at the same time it is highly attractive to demons. Why Anguru-dumalla paliya has to come to cure the patients, and why he has the power (warrant) to order other spirits to give up the disease, is unclear to me, but he does have this power.

Kokulu paliya received the cock in the first place to cure Queen Manikpala, during the first Suniyama rite. He got the cock from Ambara rshi. The cock was offered in the first Suniyama ritual to be performed, and as an offering it has the potential to break evil influence. Hugh Nevill (1955:298) recounts this first use of the cock; "It was then discovered that fowls had been born in the belly of Kala Raksi, their father being the Rshi Iswara himself, and the cock was then in the Asura world, residing in the Asura flag… Widul Wala-haka Deva, the god of lightning, went for it…Since that day yakku receive fowls as offerings." This myth depicts the cock as a bearer of the potential powers of another rshi, the god Shiva (Iswara). In the rituals the cock is mainly regarded as a human sacrificial effigy.. The Adura's trick is to make the Yakku accept the cock as compensation for the patient's body. I emphasise that due to the Buddhist ideal of non-violence, the cock is usually not killed, but survives its sacrificial role.

The seven "gifts" of the paliyas are now ritually processed and placed around the mal maduve/vidiya – the "flower shed" – of the Riddi Bishavas. For each item the song of origin is recited, a dance step is performed and the object placed by the foot or at the top of the offering stands of the "flower shed", of which there are seven in this rite – one for each queen. By these actions the "flower shed" "has life breathed into it" in a protective vein, but is not yet "charged" with the power of the Riddi. The white cloth that has covered the Bali

[23] I am not sure whether this is the correct transliteration of this mountain's name.

image of Kalu Kumare is removed, and three incense sticks are put at the top of the frame. The offering to the Bali image will be the very last to be processed.



In the Maha Samayama the theme of the rite changes into the
Riddi Yage – offerings to the Riddi princesses

5.5.2 Origin of the Rata Yakuma Ritual

The song of origin of the Rata Yakuma is recited. The Riddi Bishawas have "arrived" and are now about to be pleaded with. The story goes as follows:

THE STORY OF ORIGIN OF THE RATA YAKUMA RITE
I worship the Lord Buddha, Dhamma and Sanga before everything

In the city called Kusinava RataYaka was born
In this town there was a river called Nevanjara, where eleven thousand queens used to play while bathing

In that river, there is a powerful goddess
My vision runs through those waves and under the waves
Let free the power of Pattini.

Then Pattini reached the place with fire all around with high flames
Dear young sisters with your power make the heat cooler
Feeling very happy about these polite words Pattini Devi visited from the air to rest in Sri Lanka

Recite the birth of Rata Yaka and accept these offerings please. Seven queens look at us, save the queens (probably still nonsense)

At this time, the enlightened Deepanka Buddha reduced the powers of the fire and flames
From the Rangiri Kota, the mountain, the queens stepped down,
the Bisav came in a ship and landed

The Bisav came in peace, showing her power from the start
Came to Sri Lanka to accept the offerings

Having seen this Mangara Devi, arrived here with a gold casket in his hands
We wish to admire you (Bishava), who has had such power from the ancient times, by these verses (kavi)

From Kakkusanda Konagama Kasyapa Gautama and Deepankara Buddhas collection of powers,
Bisav is coming towards us

Fire and flames coming up from Rangiri mountain. All the golden books and manuscripts are burnt.
Everything was burnt around the forest and as a result Yakkus came to power to this world

With beautiful features and a thousand followers Deepankara was born at the foot of the Rangiri mountain.
Building a Rangamandala (ceremonial space) with all detailed decorations, filling it with tasty and delicious foods

Offerings will be made to get rid of sicknesses and Bisava will come to this offering shed (maduva)

King Naga at this moment with a big shout came onto the flowerbed asking for offerings
Naga Bisav came to the stage

Standing on the Sath giri Parwatha mountain calling up the waves of the seven seas
Seven Kiriammas (milk mothers) came up to the scene

Mudun Male Bisav with aromatic perfumes and the smell of Sandun and with flowers came up like Sunshine

As the ancient Deepanka Buddha with offering of scented flowers spreading far and wide,
Erugal Bisava stepped forward

Gautama Buddha his Dhamma Asana, sat, with the emotional powers drawing away fate
Dharmala Bisav came onto the scene (appeared)
Spreading the power in the world with Ran Male (golden necklace / chain) out of the
Malen Bisava appeared wearing veils and divine clothes

Building seven pandols and decorating them with Sandun
Bisava approached from Seven mountains and there were offerings of flowers and perfume

Bisava approached from the sea wearing pearls and golden earrings and wearing a saree covering the head

Bisava played in the sky and those who play in the atmosphere, all of them approached with the Sapumal Bisav

Riddi Bisava comes to dance with the Riddu Saluwa after bathing in the seven lakes and having her hair perfumed

Walking around the sky and coming down to the Blue-sea with its heavy ocean waves with the smell of Sapu mal and Ruk mal flowers

From afar with the smell of Sandun Nawa Male Bisav comes,
Wearing different kinds of beautiful clothes (salu)
Nawa Male Bisav coming with her many followers, a crowd of other Bisavas

From the Saman Kule Parwata (Adams Peak) wearing golden chains eradicating illnesses, Iddha Male Saman appears

Kechch ganda, rings on toes of the legs Sachcha, gold chain around the neck
with the orders of the Buddha the Bisav steps forward from the Pichche flower

Seven Bisavas playing in the sky, the barren Bisav playing in the air and spreading chilliness (cooling effect) the seven Bisavas were born in the air

Bisav playing in the sky, and others playing in air, please eradicate these illnesses
Bisav was born in the air

Taking the Eddhi Salawa into the hands through Eddhi being in the air, with the sound of Yaka, Eddhi Bisava came to the Mal Maduwa ("flower shed")

Lama Bisav (child queens) listen to my poems (kavi),
accept my offerings and to come to the decorated maduwa

Wear your clothes from the very first flower and cover yourself with Sandul smell,
accept the offerings by mothers coming in a thousand ships

Take out your Riddi Saluwa with your hands, take away sufferings with your Riddi power,
accept our offerings and Riddi Bisav please be here with us
Take that Ransalamba, here with jingling bangles, with your hands spread your powers everywhere

Eradicate the illnesses of human beings
a human comes to the bed where the Ginidjal Bisav was born (fire flames queen)

Quickly get into the Malyahana (flowerbed), with the Sandun smell
with the knowledge of Mahanil mal Bisava's birth

Loving milk mothers listen to the cry of the infants
without any delay come to this Ranga Mandala

Just like the cry of the "kirala" bird on a rock in the sea
like the butterfly taking "nectar" from a flower and like the gona deer crying on a stone

Just as the king of the water fell in the sky
Seven Bisavas say, take these coins with happiness

We are pleading for a chance (waramak)
please accept the coins from Sri Lanka

Use the powers in your hands quickly, jalapathi, king of the water,
please go to the top of the Anduru Giri mountain.

At first thinking of the power, the fire mountain was made to appear (kini kanda) but soon it lost power
Do you feel sorry for all this Patthini, Surinda Deviya?

Why do you make such a fire?
We will allow you to have your own way as before
Would you please give us the chance we are asking for?

In the way you gave chances in those days
Understand from the books of nækatt (auspicious times)
Using 68 makkara times
Accept these on Wednesday

The end

The seven queens came from the sea to Sri Lanka and were greeted by the god Mangara. They cooled the heat of the goddess Pattini, the local heroine of fertility cults, and the heat of the Rangiri Mountain and arrived by ship in Sri Lanka. The god Mangara, the Buffalo god residing in the South-Eastern province, welcomed their arrival with a golden casket. There are more than seven names of Riddi queens in this myth, and they are named after flowers (sex) and the powers of an enlightened Buddha and the elements. Reference is also made to Rata Yaka at the beginning of the myth but who he is I am not certain. According to an Adura that I spoke with, Rata Yaka causes barrenness in children, which the Riddi Bishava does not.

According to the myth, Riddi has the power to cool the heat (fertile powers) of Pattini. Riddi possesses curing powers, she has godly features and capacities due to her Buddhist powers and "connections" and she does not bring harm. The Yaka craving foetuses who is addressed in the ritual is Kalu Kumare, not Riddi. Nonetheless the greatest sacrifice in the rite is given to Riddi. In comparison, in the Mahasona Samayama rite, it is the Aduras power to control the Yakku as Mahasona that eventually releases the patient from malevolent influence. In this rite however, the Aduras call upon Riddi to bring about a cure to the patient, instead of "controlling" and "binding" her powers". The Riddi that is portrayed by

the Aduras in the dance/drama however, is nothing like a queen but a quite blunt and direct "village woman" with a flirtatious attitude.

The Bishava are then described with their dresses, perfumes and jewellery. They are greeted as milk mothers and child queens. Most important, in the ritual theme of the Rata Yakuma, they come with a white cloth, the Riddi sallue (cloth). Their birth is blessed by the powers of Buddha. The rangirikota (gem mountain casket) and the rangiri (gem mountain) are important places of reference in the myth. The Rangirikote referred to in the myth are thought to be located at Usangode/Ranne/Kahadiragoda, close to the river Vallevegange in the south east of Sri Lanka. To get there we have to cross the river. In the seven rankottes found at this mountain, kotte is the name of the casket in the spear of the dagoba in which treasures are kept, and in these particular rankottes the (leftover) cottonseeds of the Riddis are hidden. According to this myth, Buddha himself was born by the foot of the Rangiri mountain. In this myth the central theme of the Rata Yakuma rite is given. It tells how the Bishawas grew cotton and wove a cloth that they offered to Buddha in order to conceive children. The Bishawas are asked to come to the "flower shed" and at the "flower shed" there are seven torches and seven silver coins. Flowers are employed here as metaphors for sensuality and sexual action – thus the concept; "flower shed".



Nandasena is offering the "top cloth" – to the Kalu Kumare vidiya

One of the Aduras then takes the top cloth of which each fold has been charmed and tied together earlier in the evening. The cloth is taken to the aturea where dumalla smoke is wafted over it and the Maha-Chari recites the story of the origin of the cloth. The Maha Chari greets the seven torrannas (offering stands) with the cloth while dancing gestures of salutation, and nods his head with the cloth on top towards the offering stands. In one rite viewed, the four Aduras took the cloth in turn and repeated the movement patterns of the Maha Chari. Then, the aturea, as a closure of the act, gives "disti/pillu" to the cloth three times – from face to cloth and the cloth, which is still tied up, is left to be further processed later on the top of the main offering stand.

When the Aduras have recited the myth and danced their dance of salutation accompanied by drums, the Aduras take a break, and inform the people present about the ritual procedures to come. Here is a speech from one of the rituals that I viewed:

Guru; "I want everyone to be silent for five minutes"
Gurunanse: "Yes it is not possible without that"
Guru: "When those people are speaking they cannot hear what we are saying. This is our 'podimama', he is here. He has come here regarding the illness the "podi hamini" has. So we will tie a thread and will free her from obstacles. We have been doing this shanti karmaya (rite of blessing) since noon and so far we have not asked permission from anyone. It is only at this moment that we got permission from the head of the house, and from everyone present here"
Gurunanse: "Yes, it is not nice if we do not do that, is it?"
Guru: "I am getting permission from the head Adura in our ritual"
Gurunanse: "That's right"
Guru: "And we have to get permission among ourselves, from each other. We know we have to get permission.
Gurunanse: "Yes we have to do so otherwise we do not know how to proceed"
Guru: "I was planning to do more than I knew, as my teacher, my parents had taught me. All three of us are from the same village are we not? Only you two have come from another village. You are the only ones that live a bit far from our village, yet it is if as we are all from the same village, and we have to work in the same way and finish what we started. There are so many various yak Aduras are there not?

Gurunanse: “Yes”

Guru: “And they know how to do the Rata Yakuma rite in various ways. Ok, we will do it in the way we can. Let’s do this Riddi Yage Tovil as we know it. We should get permission from the head Adura mahattea, should we not?”

Gurunanse: “Of course”

Guru: “Here, this is the aturea mahattea. ??? Aibo. aibo. (the Aduras are saluting the people)

Ok now we have asked permission. When we start this Tovil, we have to do a mangul bere pudjawa (drum sound offering). Do you know what we do in our area before we start a Tovil?”

Gurunanse: “No”

Guru: “We do a rite for pregnant women”

Gurunanse: “Oh yes”

Guru: “Oh that is the belly watch. But in our area we do it mostly for men, we do what is called the Rata Yakuma. Oh that is fine, that is something that we imported from another country”

Gurunanse: “Oh no, do you do Rata Yakuma for men?”

Guru: “Of course. How can you have children otherwise?”

Gurunanse: “If you want to meet children you can go near a school”

Guru: “Of course when you go near to a montesori you meet plenty of them. This is a Tovil called Riddi Yage – the sacrifice for the Riddi queens. . We do not know if the rite comes from a foreign country or where, that is why we call it Rata Yakuma – the rite from the foreign country. So, we take a hundred torranna (pols) and we take a hundred sticks (to build the vidiya), all the details are there, and we have to say it right.

Gurunanse: “Then you will grow roots there”

Guru: “When we do a “Set Shanti”, rite of blessing, the kavi should be heard. When all the people are shouting they cannot hear anything, we could just lie and get out”

Gurunanse: “Yeah”

Guru: “When we are doing the Riddi Yage we have to do it right, we have to do it in the exact way it is supposed to be done. We do it the way that it has been done since the ancient times”

The Adura continues to dance the offering of the torcheswhich includes the seven neatly choreographed standard dance items of this offering section. The dance is vigorous and brings about a presence of an invisible moving being through the Adura’s nods, spastic movements and sudden glances in all directions of the arena.



Swiping the hair act

Then an Adura puts the cloth on the top of his head, covers it with the "hair" and he dances the cloth steps – sallue pade – where he greets each of the seven offering stands of the "flower shed" in a choreographed pattern. The three other Aduras join in the dance, and all four of them swirl their bodies in a circle, swiping the ground with their hair. The movement is performed in faster and faster and faster circles accompanied by frantic drumbeats. This dance is the most physically demanding act to perform in the whole of the Aduras' repertoire.

The cloth is put at the top of the "flower shed", it is wafted with more incense and sprinkled with saffron water. AnAdura dances the torch dance steps – pandam pade – the Maha-chari collects the torches put at the top of the "flower shed" during the seven offerings by the Paliya procedures. With the seven in hand he blows fire three times upon the top cloth that flies into the air. The cloth is put back in place and the seven torches returned to the offering stands. Riddi Bishava controls fire. Fertile potency is associated with the element of fire and the Aduras now start to roll the torches up and down on their arms, their chests, they "eat fire" and show off and perform other actions which show that they are in control of the element. The Aduras then challenge each other's juggling skills to the great amusement of

the audience. The act works on the concept that the Riddi controls fire and her curing powers are related to the white cloth[24].

The Aduras start to dance the specially choreographed gestures and dance items "greeting" the seven princesses who are now thought to have their glance on the Mal Yahan, "flower shed". When done, the Aduras stop with bended knees, sit in a circle whilst one Adura (guru) has a comic dialogue with a drummer (gurunanse).

Drummer: I was a bit afraid when I was sitting.
Adura: No no no, even when we are sitting we are dancing.
Drummer: You make us dance when we are seated?
Adura: Ok, ok, when you are sitting and dancing you are beating it from your hand.
Drummer: Oh I got so frightened when I was sitting.
Adura: Don't try to be clever.
Drummer: I thought I wanted to shit.
Adura: ÆÆÆ, you came here to play drums did you not?
Drummer: Yes I came to play drums for this Tovil.
Adura: Ok, you came to play drums?
Drummer: Yes I came to play drums.
Adura: So if you came to play drums, does it matter to you whether we are sitting or standing?
Drummer: Even if we go to the toilet, you have to continue playing the drums.
Adura: For that, you have to catch a lice by hitting the dola (offering) with a fire blow.. Do you know why? We danced this Riddi Yage in the evening we offered flowers and lights for the gods, and in the evening we offered dola pidenis for the Yakku. After doing all that we started performing our Riddi Yage. We started performing it from 'Mahagama'.
Drummer: Mahagama?
Adura: At the moment that we started it, we danced the steps in which we asked permission, we danced the 'die male steps', and the 'samayan steps'. We performed the rhythm of the samayan pade, and after doing the dance we took the Udeyan redde (top cloth). There are 32 pella paliya (offering items) in this Mahasamayama. And we should not omit a single one.
Drummer: So this means that it is not enough for us to only dance.

[24] A similar act is performed in the Pattini rite for the goddess Pattini. If there is any correlation with the Pattini rite and this act of the Rata Yakuma I have not asked.

The Adura finally states that: "There has not been enough dancing yet. We have to do the 32 pella paliyas (offering items). In this Tovil the main thing is what you call the 'haram' steps. It is not only us, it is useful for all priests who are involved in gainful work (karmante). Maybe there are people that are listening, hearing this Tovil and they after tell us that they did not hear this particular line, steps. So, we are to do this Shanti karmaya, rite of blessing, in a very respectable and important way. There are these haram steps and we have to perform them, steps for blessing. Aibooo!" And the Adura rises up, walks around and greets everyone present, and then performs the steps of blessing for all. After the dance item is finished it is time for the Saudam – Adav dance – a set of classically choreographed dances – with a highly complex rhythm and movement structures. These are unique creations in the honour of particular gods. The Aduras do one item at the time for the protection or benefit of honourable guests, close relatives of the patient and others, and in between the acts they make puns and collect money from the people who they perform the item in the honour of.

Adura: Chinese balls

Drummer: Oh, not that, now it is time to get rid of the misfortune.

Adura: Do you know how we do that? We will take a corner of this house, you know the husband of the aturea. He is the husband of this aturea hameni. All this time, we have been doing this set shanti for this aturea hameni. Aibowan.

Drummer: Ammo, we did not say that before.

Adura: Let's start now by saying Aibowan. And we have to do the Adav.

Drummer: Yes, Adav, Adav.

Adura: Now this is the moment to see whether the aturea's husband is happy .

Drummer: Yes, this is the moment to find out his condition.

Adura: No, no, it is not his condition, we have to see if his mind is pleased (hitte hondaywella).

Drummer: Oh, yes, yes.

Adura: If he is satisfied, you know what we will get.

Drummer: Yes. I think many people get things. We get bogea (thægi bogea = present).

Adura: I want thægi, present.

Drummer: Aaahha

Adura: So I can take bogea, and give it to you so that you can grow them.

Drummer: Yes I can plant them in the sand.

Adura: If you gave it yesterday I would have planted it already.

Adura: This belongs to all three of us does it not? Both of you belong to the same gurunanse.
Drummer: Yes, otherwise they will say something different. Now Adav allemo.
Adura: Ok, let's invoke the blessings of the gods, and then ask for prosperity in the work we are doing, and let's dance.

Pattini Saudama is performed

Drummer: Gurunanser, it is like this.
Adura: What?
Drummer: This Adav is not only for the aturea hameni, and the aturea mahattea.
Adura: Yes.
Drummer: I think people are finding fault with us.
Adura: I heard the husband of the aturea saying that this Adav is only for us. Then he was saying that the people who are watching are his relatives, that this Adav was not done for them. All their older brothers, younger brothers are all there, aijoo… all their family members are here.
Drummer: Are there any people from the outside
Adura: ahhnee. There are no people from outside. Who would come from outside? So presents…
Drummer: You are the one that will get scolded in Akuressa.
Adura: Why should they scold me?
Drummer: Because you did not do the Adav for them. They would say in the other villages they do the Adav for us, they will say that you looked so proud and I do not want to hear things like that said.
Adura: Yeah, we should not hear things like that.
Drummer: Yeah, we should not get a bad name.
Adura: So, let's do the Adav for everyone.
Drummer: So we will do pattapatta gala (nonsense).
Adura: Now we will do an Adav for everyone.
Drummer: Yeah, that's the Adav we play every day

5.5.3 Maha Te – the Grand Tea Break

At a Tovil rite, everyone gets a treat, and now it is time for the earthly persons to get tea, sweet-meats, plantains. The important guests also receive treats, as do the now "tired" Aduras who deserve a break and get rice and curry.

5.5.4 Offering of the Water Pot

THE OFFERING OF THE WATER POT SONG

"Getting the permission from the gods on earth
And having the vessel in hand
They get permission from the Muni Dipankara

The seven queens bring seven vessels of water
And having taken their bath
They throw the jars into the sky

Dipankara Buddha with two thousand five hundred followers
With very beautiful features and face
Was born in Rangirikote

The Kappurumal, and having an affection towards the Kappurumal (camphor flower)
And bathing in the dough of Kappurumal and loving this Kappurumal
Now the Kappurumal queen is coming

The bed has the scent of the flowers
And the bed is beautiful
And the Kittulmal, and the kittulmal
You find a small fence where upon the queens arrive
The sufferings of the aturea (patient)
Will be over with the arrival of Maddu flower princess

When the milk mothers (kiriammas) were walking
Pleasant flower rain occurred,
Picking the flowers making a garland
And diseases caused by Kiriamma are there

Taking namal, sappumal, rukmal, ptisjemal, manil, wadde, ratopol, nilupol, manil,
The bed is made taking these nine kinds of flowers

Whose wademal is sleeping in the wide lake?

And the barren women appear in dreams
They do various good deeds
In order to become males in their next birth
Please go – leaving you

My dear milk mothers,
Hearing the cry of the infants
Without knowing with whom the child is
Please try to comfort them
The wind is coming from above
And the wind is becoming stronger from outside
And the wind power gradually increases
And I hereby offer this garland made of nine flowers

Please try to make big rains
And please come from the clouds
See that you find nine pregnant bellies
And please accept these nine flower garlands"

And making all pleadings
and to this pahan baliya we are going to make nice kavis

The end

The song is a praise of the flower offering. That the Riddi according to this myth, want to be reborn as males in their next life is a common wish of women in Sri Lanka as they hold a subordinate position in society. When the song is done, the Aduras perform the eight dance steps for the flowerbed. The basket – water jar – is placed on a chair in front of the "mullu torranne" in the centre of the "flower shed". It will be used during the Riddi toilet act to follow in a short while.



Amaradjiva with the pot in hand

5.5.5 The Offering of the Pot to the Riddi Bishawas

The aturea, places areca nut flowers in the seven holes of the pot presents a coin, and gives "disti", and then the Adura places the pot on the top of the flower stand, which is the offering stand in the middle of the structure. In some versions of this act the Riddi's powers make the pot tremble in the hands of the Adura. The verses sung before the pot is finally placed on the stand are:

Making four vessels, sending them to the world of naga, finding who the powerful person is
This kottele was found in the seven mountains and it was brought here by the bishawas
Please accept this kottele.

This kottele came from the seven seas and you can find seven edges in this kottele.
And this kottele came with the bisava,
Please accept this kottele.

It came from the Isangoda and it is a milk mother's milk kottele,
and it came with the Bishava
so please accept this kottele.

And this kottele was given by Riddi bishawas,
and in this kottele you find seven heads of cobras,
and it came with the bishawas
so please accept this kottele

The end

5.5.6 Navamali Malbaliya (Nine Flowers to Baliya)

The flower basket to be offered to the Riddis is prepared, incense is wafted over it, chants are performed and the aturea puts flowers into the baliya. The verses go like this:



Amaradjiva chanting over the flower baliya

In that particular den, on the top of a rock,
Widurasene was imprisoned and he lost all his compassion

Over seven seas in a rock named Willodi, there was a big pond
And in that there was a blue sapu tree

Now on top of that tree there were flowers of five colours and in it were born princesses

Please tell who they are

Understanding our lord Buddha being on top of that rock

It was mentioned that they were seven Riddi Princesses



Offering of the flower clay basket

FLOWER (MAL) CLAY BASKET (BALIYA) KAVI

To this Mal baliya they take nine moulds of clay

Then they make blue and red colours

In the middle gabbe (room) they place flowers and betels

Mal sami please accept this baliya.

To this mal baliya they make nine gabbes (rooms)

To the four corners, they give blue flowers

In the middle they keep mal bullat

Please mal sami, please accept this baliya

These queens are going to make a ship.

To the ship they sent planks separately

They are five hundred queens.

They made the ship on Sunday

They loaded the ship on Monday

They made the sails on Tuesday

They launched the ship on Wednesday

They like the pitcheflower and its smell
And they bathe in the water incensed by pitchemal[25]
And the queen arrives on a pitchemal"

The end

The offering of the Flower Baliya is the last item to be offered to Riddi. The Adura then performs an act of dedication to the "flower shed" while he dances and throws the baliya high in the air, swirls it around his arms, and places offerings at each of the seven offering stands. Riddi has been called upon, she has arrived – she has been pleaded with – and it is time to re-enact the powers of the cloth sacrifice once created for Dipankara Buddha – her "husband".

5.5.7 Inviting the Riddis to the "Flower Shed"

The glare of the sun is there and the smell of sandalwood is also there,
and walking right round many miles to the top of that rock,
this Modon male Bishava arrives
(the Riddi wearing flower garlands around her neck)

According to the order of Gautama Buddha all the illnesses of Karma go away
and the blessings of this particular Lord Buddha, in a rush Dharmapale Bishava arrives
(the religiously minded Riddi)

When referring to Vesamuni and giving all these offerings to all the people in Sri Lanka
and because of this power Konde Mal Bishava arrives
(the Riddi with garlands in her hair)

Worshipping several Buddhas, the nice smell makes the person come forward
and having seen that power and secrecy, Ranaka Pale Bishava arrives
(the golden Riddi)

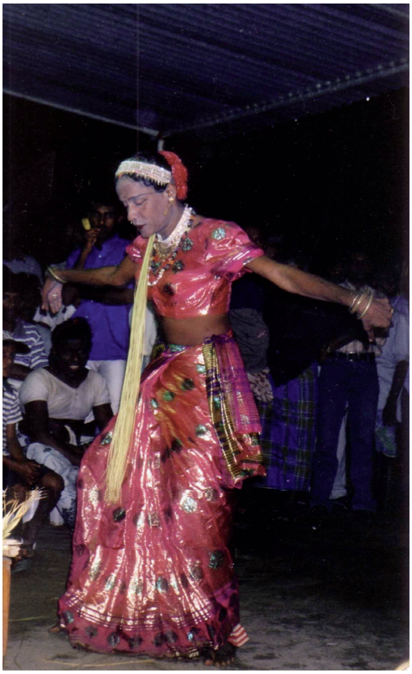
[25] A kind of jasmine flower

Knowing that there are seven ponds and suggesting bathing in those seven ponds and returning after having a bath, Ohmkara Bishava arrives
(the Riddi that knows mantra)

Being in Sri Lanka and not listening to the effect that nothing will happen, and liking the smell of the flowers Girimekale Bishava arrives
(the Riddi of stones and rocks)

With the Riddi cloth (sallue) over the head, Irdi Bishava enters invisibly, Irdi Bishava comes in the air to the Irdi Bishava's bed
(the Riddi that travels through air)

The end



Somatilleka as Riddi

5.5.8 The Riddi Bishava's Toilet Act

The stage is now set with a "scene drapery", as mentioned in the Natyasastra, hung up inside the "flower shed". Somatilleka dresses up while reciting the song inviting the Riddis to come and have a bath:

Dressing in this white cloth wrapped around the waist, and covering the two shoulders and wearing a golden jacket
and dressing in very attractive ornaments, Bishava is wearing a full dress with frills

Riddi Bishava is playing in this golden pond
and comes to the bank playing in this pond of gems
to accept the plates with coins. Please come you princess like a golden statue to his bed

Away from the seven seas, on the waves of the seven seas
Riddi Bishava please come to this decorated madue to have a bath
Picking flower buds and wearing them

Taking baths in the jasmine-petal pond
and being seated on the petals of the jasmine, spinning bunches of flowers
why did you Bishava who came from the barren pond

Picking flowers with a big noise, and playing in the water of the jasmine-petal pond
And with a gang of three hundred thousand guardian soldiers
Riddi Bishava comes to have a bath

Applying the juice of lime to wash away the salt of the hair and to get rid of the diseases in Ono wille,
so that the diseases will be eradicated.
Riddi Bishava is now ready to have a bath.

The Princess Adura Riddi makes a grand entrance, dancing the graciously created initial steps for this act around the arena while she sings one verse at a time, which is repeated by another Adura. When the song is finished, the "Riddi bath act" begins. The drummer and the Riddi have a flirtatious conversation and the drummer beats an accompaniment to each of her mimic actions. Riddi "washes" her hair, sprinkles water on it, and draws the water out of the straws in a rhythmic manner. She brushes her teeth with her fingers. She splashes

water on her body with the water jar while dancing around. She washes her body with her hair, sprinkles water on the children, eats the soap and rubs the soap on her intimate parts. She gets soap into her eyes and finishes the bath blinded. Very many of these gestures demonstrate the highly improper mannerisms of Riddi.



Riddi Somatilleka is washing her hair

BATHING SONG (NANOMORE)

Now listen to the nanomore mangale with liking.
In Dhammadiva Nimale mountain, Rangiri Katagiri came to see the princess who here resides.

Looking towards the park having not seen any limes, she went to the King Naradjo, to ask for lime-plants like this.
With the power of god Saman, going through all the plans, she quickly brought some flowers and plants of lime.

Having taken a few lime fruits, having come back with them she was in search of cool water to have a bath.
Very clear and pure like Pinidiye, and very cool, there was a river called Neranjene.

She went to that particular river, and stood on top of the sandy areas,
and now and then ran about just above the surface of the river water
When this particular bishava was playing in the water with such powers,
it was hard to find out who this bishava was

When she was playing in the water like this Pattini Bishava thought of seeing what powers she had
Having flowers on the head, the petals of those flowers started singing nice songs.

With the lotus flowers and mixing with pinnidiye, she ground up the flowers and made paste of nano

The Pattini arrived at the spot, and round the river she made seven flames of fire,
even though the water was very cool, Pattini Bishava was very happy.
Then she asked, where are you from sisters? How did you make the water so cool?
Did you come with the powers of Dipankara Buddha's land?

To make all prosper and to come to this madue and accept these offerings
and to recover all the diseases made soon be here on this madue

To appear on the pond on the top of the mountain
To have a swim in the pond, and to make flowers on the two banks of the pond
The princess is bathing, taking water from the pond

Making seven princesses bathe in the water
and walk above the water
when they come out of the water to be away from the chill of the water
they go and bathe again in the Isangode pond

The end



For Riddi Somatilleka to bath is to dance

Riddi: With the soap in her hand: Harry shook (very good).

Guru: You lick it and see.

Riddi: Hmm it is good.

Guru: Did you eat it? You have to bite it. With your teeth. You have to put one inside your mouth and bite it.

Riddi: Do I have to eat it?

Guru: Oh… here is the maha giri kande.

Riddi: Oh here is the maha giri kande.

Guru: So this is our siripolea, so what?

Riddi: Yes, this is siripolea.

Guru: From this side I can enter as much as I can.

Riddi: Oh, I am sorry about that.

Guru: Oh look here, I do not know whether I will make a hole

Riddi: No, you put it inside your mouth.

Riddi: Oh look what has happened to me.

Guru: What has happened?

Riddi: Look what happened by doing what you told me to do. I got water in my ears while bathing.

Guru: Oh did you get water in your ears?

Riddi: Oh yes, now my ear is like a tank (water).

Guru: Oh, then your ear will be blocked (appo). In which ear did you get water?

Riddi: Oh, now what am I going to do?

Guru: You fill your other ear with water, then things will be alright.

Riddi: Oh, I can do that easily.

Guru: What are you going to do?

Riddi: I am going to fill my other ear with water.

Guru: Then you can work both on land and in the mud.

Riddi: Yes, then I can work both on land and in the mud.

Guru: You can get crops from both yalle and maha (the two monsoons).

Riddi: No, no that is not what I mean. Tell me, what am I supposed to do now?

Guru: What do you mean?

Riddi: What am I supposed to do to my ear?

Guru: You put water into your ear and just beat it really hard.

Riddi: On the other side?

Guru: Yes.

Drum – and the Riddi beats her ear

Guru: Is it ok now?

Riddi: Yes it is ok now.

Drums.

Riddi: I bathed?

Guru: That's it. It is like the cat. That's good. See the other one?

Riddi: No, that is not what I mean.

Guru: Hmm?

Riddi: Do you know what I am applying to my body?

Guru: What are you applying?

Riddi: I use Lux (a brand of soap).

Guru: Lux?

Riddi: Oh. Leave me alone.

Guru: It's your luck.

Riddi: My luck?

Guru: Yes.

Riddi: Oh. My luck is nothing now. Now it's like a withered stick.

Guru: Oh no, no, not that.

Riddi: Yes.

Guru: Do you know what I am using? *Riddi*: What?

Guru: I use … you show me.

Riddi: So you and me show, then we will not be able to recognise the younger and elder sister.

Guru: Yes… drums.

Guru: Oh, look he is eating it (the soap).

Guru: Now, you will get diarrhoea and will have to go to the toilet in the morning.

Riddi: Oh, stop teasing me. I thought it was a lollipop.

Guru: Oh, I was thinking it was gorroka bus. It will be great if you eat it.

Riddi: æhhh.

Guru: When you apply it on your skin it becomes golden, so imagine what happens if you eat it. You will become like a gem.

Drums

Guru: What are you hiding there?
Riddi: Oh, you are not allowing me to have a bath.
Guru: Are you not ashamed of yourself, do you not have anything called shame? Go to the back and have a bath.

Drums

Riddi: Oh, look here he is putting snot on me.
Guru: Anee, show me.
Riddi: The well is in the front, the well is here.
Guru: The moon is here.
Guru: Oh, have a bath my moon.
Adura: You are on the edge of the well.
Guru: Now you are going to fall into the well.

The Riddi is now "clean" and ready to do her toilet. She sings the following songs while she "gets herself ready", in a playful, cheering and humorous manner. The drummers play up to her songs and her gestures.

Comb Kavi
Of steel the teeth of the comb is made
Brought all these things from the giants and made this comb to be used by Usangode bisava
On top of the sky this was brought
And from Bintenne was brought and cut and made this comb for the chief Bishava to comb her hair

Comb the hair and hold it in your hand
And like the flower patterned Sari, place it over your shoulders
Apply oil and comb the hair well. You chief princess made of flowers

Perfume
Being seated on the bed, taking down the vessel of oil
With the blessings of all the gods who are close by
She applies oil on her hair so that the hair will be very clean and straight
Hair stick
Now she is getting ready taking this koru in her right hand

And getting permission from all the gods who are close by

Getting the powers from all the people above

She is fixing the koru to her hair

Earrings

Earrings which are shining like the rising sun

And having seen the sunrise

These particular earrings and giving a very good shine as it is from the moon

Chief Bishava is fixing the earrings to her ears.

Necklace

It seems like you find a lot of stones with decorations

And in it you find shadows of each and every stone fixed in it

And it looks like a pattern of white sand

Chief princess is wearing a big necklace (of yellow flowers)

The Bangles

Hands can be seen with a lot of golden bangles

It seems very beautiful at a distance when she walks, having hands full of bangles

Tikiri kumara you are very beautiful

The application of Sandun

Sandal wood application that is in a vessel made of gems

And which is brought from afar

And mixed with pinnidiye and kappuro (camphor)

And sharing among the seven princesses

The application of the Bullat

The scented ginger oil which is put in the vessel made of golden gems

And looking at the mirror all seven of them are applying andun on their eyes

The Bullat

Brought from over seven seas,

Camphor and betel mixed with pinnidiye (purified water) they take them

Before having their bath, Usangode Bishava arrives

The mirror

To this place you are coming with a mirror made of gems
And looking at it and have you not gone anywhere else
Maniknanlabo (the princess with the gem name arrives).
And the diadem on the head made of gold
And taking her mirror in hand listening to our pleading
Listen you fire flamed princess who makes judgements



Riddi Bishava/Somatilleka is now fully dressed up. She takes the offering-basket to the aturea, salutes her and departs from the "scene"

Each song is concluded with a set of standardised hand postures called mudras. However, the gestures are not expressions of distinctive concepts as given in the Natyasastra. I learned by reading the text that the "Bath act" as a whole is clearly inspired by the descriptions given in the text of proper costumes, mannerisms and features for the portrayal of various divine characters. When done with the toilet, Riddi takes the basket with her and leaves the arena, and hides behind the "stage cloth" while dressing up for the next act of the story.

5.5.9 The Spinning and Weaving of the Cloth Act

Riddi Adura has sung a song about the mat – a different version than the song sung in relation to the Avanmangala Depavila act earlier, and she enters the scene with the mat under her arm and the cotton buds and spinning machine in hand. She sits down and her assistant joins "her" as he is to play the part of the "silent" husband Dipankara Buddha. The comedy dialogue, which includes more punning on words than I am able to convey through

translation – starts. The theme of the act is in short: Riddi got married to a beautiful man who was sexually appealing to her, but as a husband he was not much of a catch as he gambles, he drinks, and is impotent. Riddi Adura prepares to make the cloth and she goes through the full procedure such as the sowing of the seeds, plucking, shredding, bleaching, weighing, spinning, weaving and washing it. Throughout the act Riddi sits on her mat and mimics the hand gestures required for the creation of a cloth but does not perform any dance as such.

Riddi: You are telling the truth?
Guru: The truth without ever seeing.
Riddi: The truth is a lie.
Guru: Do you truly lie?
Riddi: Do you truly lie?
Guru: Men never lie.
Riddi: Never?
Guru: I will tell it so that only you can hear.
Riddi: Sixteen thousand queens, sixty eight milk mothers, five hundred princesses, ninety kelak queens, naYakas (leaders). I am the leader, the youngest, the most naïve, and the cutest, I am the one that is called by all these names
Guru: Leading? Naive? Cute? Young? Old? All this?
Riddi: Anee gurunanse. I am the leading young queen.
Guru: You are the young queen?
Riddi: Gurunanse, do you know my place?
Guru: Yes, your place was down there.
Riddi: Not there, our house – the top roof in the house, the topmost place in our house.
Guru: Here and there in the house there are walls.
Riddi: Not that gurunanse. Do you not know our house?
Guru: How am I supposed to know your house?
Riddi: You have never been there?
Guru: No.
Riddi: You have never seen our house?
Guru: I never went to see your house.
Riddi: There is a corpse in our house.
Guru: There is a corpse in your house?

Riddi: No, no, the nose. The living room in our house.

Guru: The living room.

Riddi: The goose in our house.

Guru: The goose was down there, it was near the toilet.

Riddi: Our house, you do not know?

Guru: Ahh.

Riddi: The porroke.

Guru: The porroke has fallen now.

Riddi: The cat (pusa) in our house.

Guru: The cat was in the corner of the hedge.

Riddi: No, not that gurunanse, the mahattea (man) in our house.

Guru: Pathea (goose).

Riddi: The goose in our house was just here but has just left.

Guru: Does the pathea (goose) often run away like that?

Riddi: Yes, at times he just sneaks off. Anee gurunanse, I have a very beautiful man.

Guru: What do you mean by beautiful?

Riddi: It is an object (badue =object or sex object) I got for luck.

Guru: Not for luck, it was due to your bad karma.

Riddi: He is a pillar of virtue.

Guru: Oh… yah. pillar of virtue.

Riddi: Ahe… I did not want this marriage to happen. It was because of my parents that I agreed to it.

Guru: Oh, you did not like it?

Riddi: Oh, I did not like it at all, but what could I do?

Guru: Ah.

Riddi: He was a beautiful man

Guru: What do you mean by beautiful?

Riddi: He looked like a wiper.

Guru: How nice.

Riddi: He was really, really red.

Guru: Oh, he must have been really red.

Riddi: The belly was like a round pot.

Guru: Buddhu ammee.

Riddi: The ass was like a ...

Guru: Your man must be really beautiful

Riddi: I will show it, look here is the sex object/the thing.

Guru: You have leaned it against the wall.

Riddi: Yes, it is leaning against the wall.

Guru: Look at him well.

Riddi: Yes, since the day we came here, we have had everything.

Guru: You did not have to beg?

Riddi: Oh, we do not beg, we just ask for food. Since the day we came here, we have been very prosperous. We have had everything we needed, begging without begging. Anee. This is a pillar of virtue.

Guru: I bet it is a pillar of virtue.

Riddi: Gurunanse, it has not been long since we got married.

Guru: Mmm. Do you have children?

Riddi: Well, we got married before. We got married at the secretariat.

Guru: Riddi secretariat. I also saw how the walls were made.

Riddi: What did you say?

Guru: Riddi secretariat was built.

Riddi: I do not think that you understand.

Guru: How could I understand?

Riddi: It is not that gurunanse. We got married at the secretariat.

Guru: Ah

Riddi: We went to the secretariat and we got married.

Guru: You got married?

Riddi: Yes, we got to the secretariat and got married.

Guru: Yes.

Riddi: Well, you know that when we get married we did not get home. We both went to the garage.

Guru: To the garage?

Riddi: The bearing in the man is gone.

Guru: You wanted to weld him.

Riddi: Gurunanse, tell me; where are you supposed to go once when you get married?

Guru: Do you know where you are supposed to go? You have to go to the rest house.

Riddi: We went to the boarding house.

Guru: You went to the boarding house? Yes, you mean that you went to the bus stop?

Riddi: Anee gurunase, when we were coming back all the way.

Guru: So?

Riddi: Yes, they prepared it on the beach. It was under the wettakeya plants. They had prepared it on the ground.

Guru: On the ground.

Riddi: Yes, everything was on the ground. They had prepared all the sweets (kævili=sweets, kærrelii=roll).

Guru: What was there?

Riddi: There were lanu kerreli (thread rolls). Danga kerreli.

Guru: Pudding?

Riddi: There was pudding, lossinger, ahangam poddume, saudodoll (kinds of sweets). When we were getting out of the car there were two children that came and expressed their sympathy.

Guru: They expressed their sympathy? Was someone dead? Were they reading ashtaka?

Riddi: Two children came and they put a flower garland around my man's neck

Guru: It was not a garland, it was a necklace of flowers.

Riddi: So they had put on this necklace and took us up to the table.

Guru: So, then our mahattea (man) wanted to eat.

Riddi: He wanted to eat a penniarugeddiye (a kind of fruit).

Guru: Yes.

Riddi: And there were served Ahangampollu, and that turned in different ways.

Guru: They were in different ways?

Riddi: The man in our house he likes saudedoll.

Guru: So he took it like this?

Riddi: And then the wave came and the saudedoll slipped out of my hand and only a little chilli was left. So, I was very sad, do you know why?

Guru: Anee amme.

Riddi: We had the pudding that was brought from up there (the sea), all the other things were carried away by the sea.

Guru: Is it so?

Riddi: Then we came home. When we came home there was udeviyang (top cloth) and pawadam (cloth to be put under (on the floor/ground)) to welcome us.

Guru: Pappadam?

Riddi: It is not pappadam (cracker), it is pawadam (cloth to be put under (on the floor/ground)).

Guru: So there was pawadam?

Riddi: When we went inside there were others that were saying erashtaka.

Guru: Did they say erashtaka (a bad planet) (æasthaka= blessing). It is not erashtaka it is æasthaka, blessing?

Riddi: When we went inside the house, they were shooting and eating coconut.

Guru: They were shooting and eating coconut?

Riddi: No they were cracking the coconut against the floor.

Guru: So they brought the coconut and brought you inside?

Riddi: Yes.

Guru: Why did they shoot?

Riddi: They were not shooting, but having fireworks.

Guru: Was it for happiness?

Riddi: Yes, it was for happiness.

Guru: Well, you were the first daughter in law, were you not?

Riddi: What do you mean?

Guru: Well, you were the first daughter in law.

Riddi: Yes, so it was a valuable thing for them.

Guru: So, everyone was in tears.

Riddi: Yes, everyone was in tears. Then gurunanse, the man in our house does not know how to do housework. He would just swallow anything that I cooked and gave him. And then he would sleep near the stove. So, I was sad, I used to cry and cry.

Guru: So you were crying?

Riddi: Yes I used to cry and cry, and go to him – do you hear me? Then he would say uhm and turn the other way.

Guru: So he would just crawl up?

Riddi: So it would make me sad. After that gurunanse, in the early morning would go around the "godde".

Guru: Ahh.

Riddi: He used to go around the godde and eat ra (palm tree toddy).

Guru: It is not eating ra, it is drinking ra.

Riddi: He used to drink ra and come home and take me as a race.

Guru: It is not race, it is a taste (snacks).

Riddi: Although I came, he did not stop his old habit of coming and going. In the evening he came home drunk on his hands and knees.

Guru: Then he was like a cow.

Riddi: You know what he did after he came home?

Guru: Yes…?

Riddi: He asked for something to eat.

Guru: Was it from you that he asked for a snack?

Riddi: Yes it was from me.

Guru: So… in those days you made him a snack, even though you do not do it any longer?

Riddi: But how can I do it everyday? Does he expect me to make it out of my own blood?. When this stupid man spends everything I have, how am I supposed to provide him with a snack? What am I supposed to give?

Guru: Are you supposed to give your heart, are you supposed to give him your brain?

Riddi: So in that way *Gurunanse,* he wasted everything that we owned. He lost everything and all that was left were the two earrings on my ears. My goodness, one day he came home really drunk, he beat me up and pulled my hair while reaching for my earrings.

Guru: Oh,. that is a nice thing.

Riddi: That day, he was also very drunk and had lost all his bets, just like all the other days.

Guru: So he had had a lot of ra that day?

Riddi: Yes, and he was asking for snack. How am I supposed to provide him with all that?

So, I had lost everything and I was beaten up by him.

Guru: My goodness (oh, father). So now what is left for you to do is to hide your nose in the ground.

Riddi: My man had gone to Rohuna and he had announced our names again (registered them for marriage).

Guru: He had gone there and done that? Oh, there is nothing to that man. He is very dim-witted.

Riddi: He had registered our marriage and started farming there since he could not do any other job. Since he had no money he started farming. He had started to cultivate talle.

Guru: So he was not cultivating rice?

Riddi: No, he was cultivating talle.

Guru: So, he was cultivating talle?

Riddi: Although he went there he had not told his name to anyone. He is such a cunning man.

Guru: Cunning.

Riddi: Since he did not tell his name or where he came from, the people there called him the talle goiya (talle farmer, but there is also a huge lizard named the same).

Guru: So now he calls himself the talle goiya?

Riddi: He does not leave alone a single thorn he finds.

Guru: Buddhu appachi. Oh Buddha father.

Riddi: They call him the talle goirale (farmer).

Guru: Talle goirale?

Riddi: Wherever he is, I wonder if it is him who has his hand on my head at this moment.

Guru: You have to check it yourself.

Riddi: I wonder if my man is impotent.

Guru: You should touch his head and see.

Riddi: Can you touch it and see?

Guru: To see whether he is impotent? Do you want your man to be impotent?

Riddi: To check whether my man is an amporochea a man who is impotent. Will you tell him to look the other way so that I can look at his side and see?

Guru: What?

Riddi: Can you look the other way so that I can look at his penis?

Guru: Why can you not look at it while he is looking at you?

Riddi: Oh. I feel a little bit embarrassed.

Guru: What do you mean. You used to look at his "face" well, did you not?

Riddi: Do I have to hug the man?

Guru: Yes, get closer.

Riddi: Ok. *Gurunanse*. Now I am going to check his body. (*Riddi* Adura starts examining the assistant that is seated besides her acting as her husband) What is this, it's like a heedeva?

Guru: Riddi heedeva?

Riddi: Yes.

Guru: That is his hair.

Riddi: Yes, it is his hair. It is like a coconut or a talgeddiye.

Guru: That is the head.

Riddi: Yes.

Guru: Pomegranate, Manjokka, (referring to various fruits).

Riddi: No, it's the head. He claims that he cultivated kurukkan (barley), here he has "talle" and kurukkan and other things.

Guru: There must be turtles.

Riddi: Yeha.

Guru: There must be songs.

Riddi: Yes.

Guru: Lice and eggs and bears and deer.

Riddi: Gurunanse, there is a half moon.

Guru: That's the forehead. His forehead is rotten.

Riddi: Yes, something is wrong with the forehead.

Guru: It's the forehead.

Riddi: Forehead. Gurunanse, it is soon going to rain.

Guru: Why is that?

Riddi: Because there are two rainbows on his face.

Guru: Buddhu. Amme. It is like creating rainbows, the rainbows will absorb all the water. It is the two eyebrows.

Riddi: The two eyebrows? The eyebrows continue into two villages (huge).

Guru: How can the eyebrows be so big?

Riddi: On the two sides, there are two oilcakes.

Guru: There are two oilcakes on the face?

Riddi: Look here, on these two sides.

Guru: Those are the ears.

Riddi: The ears (kanne eat/ear)? You eat one, and I will eat the other.

Guru: Kang/kang. eat/hear

Riddi: Yes, Kang, kang.

Guru: Kang kang noru (a game children play). The two ears.

Riddi: The two ears. *Gurunanse*. There is something else.

Guru: What?

Riddi: The man is blinking/kicking like a horse?

Guru: So the horse is kicking? Do not say it like that, say that he is blinking.

Riddi: He is blinking. Oh, there is another problem. The iris and the colours in the eyes are of mixed colour

Guru: Then you will have to send him to Japan or Australia.

Riddi: Yes, both are mixed at the moment.

Guru: Yes, I think that both have started to get mixed, the iris and the eye.

Riddi: *Gurunanse*, what is this? It is as if there is a frog squashed on a narrow pathway.

Guru: The frog on the narrow pathway, that is the nose.

Riddi: The nose. *Gurunanse*, there is another thing. The yodudonawa. Why is it cut upwards?

Guru: You know why. It is so it can be filled with water.

Riddi: When it is raining hard, you can turn it upside down in the middle of the field and then get it filled with water.

Guru: Then you can work during the two monsoons, yalle and maha.

Riddi: Yes.

Guru: Not, yes. Those are two things are there for breathing.

Riddi: So, it would have been better for him to have stayed in the hospital, the mortuary *Guru*: What corpse?

Riddi: Then even the dead people will be able to breathe. They could breathe in and out.

Guru: Yes, that is the place where they breathe in and out of (the nose).

Riddi: *Gurunanse*. There is another thing. He has stopped.

Guru: That is because he got frightened by seeing you.

Riddi: What is that?

Guru: That is the moustache.

Riddi: The moustache is like a broom (kåsse), katta katta katta katta. (Referring to the mouth).

Guru: That is the mouth, katta, katta.

Riddi: Katta katta.

Guru: Katta. Do not say katta katta katta now, in a little while your jaws will clap together by reflex.

Riddi: Gurunanse, there are two stone hedges.

Guru: Buddhu ammu. Stone hedges.

Riddi: Yes.

Guru: Those are the teeth.

Riddi: Dah

Guru: Not Dah, Dat (teeth). It is the other dat (anidat/anida day after tomorrow).

Riddi: It is not tomorrow, it is the day after tomorrow.

Guru: It is the day after tomorrow, the first.

Riddi: It is the day after that.

Guru: It is the teeth

Riddi: Gurunanse, there is some kind of animal moving in between those two stone hedges.

Guru: An animal. Is there a python (pimbura) inside?

Riddi: Is it a vicious animal? It is very dangerous.

Guru: I wonder if it will bite. Why do you not pull it out and show it. Pull the tongue out.

Riddi: What? What is it?

Guru: It is not a python or any snake.

Riddi: Then what is it?

Guru: Pull the tongue out and say something.

Riddi: It is not as in the old days.

Guru: That is the tongue.

Riddi: The tongue. What is it there for?

Guru: The tongue is there to boil chilli.

Riddi: To eat onion chilli mix.

Guru: Yes, I bet that you eat onion chilli mix. The tongue is there to help you eat.

Riddi: *Gurunanse*, why is it skinny here?

Guru: That is the neck (belle)

Riddi: Belle?

Guru: They would burn near the mole (the place where rice is grained).

Riddi: It has fallen down two levels

Guru: It has fallen. Buddhu ammee. It must be old.

Riddi: Yes.

Guru: Those are the two shoulders.

Riddi: What is this, it is like a taliya (a big pot).

Guru: That is the stomach (badde).

Riddi: Ællebadde

Guru: It is not ællebadde, it is the danga badde (naughty)

(Playing with various words connected with bade).

Riddi: What are these two trunks?

Guru: Those are the thighs.

Riddi: There are two coconuts.

Guru: Where?

Riddi: Here.

Guru: Those are the knees.

Riddi: There are two rice parcels – one on each side.

Guru: Those are the muscles.

Riddi: What are these? Like ginger branches?

Guru: Buddhu amme. Those are the toes, those are the nails.

Riddi: I wonder how many there are.

Guru: How many.

Riddi: How many are there?

Guru: Yes?

Riddi: Vicious animal.

Guru: Why?

Riddi: There are twenty nails. It is dangerous.

Riddi: We have to tie two iron chains.

Guru: Iron chain is not sufficient to tie him.

Riddi: When you have twenty you are fierce.

Guru: Of course. Is it a vicious/poisonous (visakurro) animal? Those are the nails.

Riddi: He has twenty nails. I checked him from head to toe and he is the man that I was with in my younger days.

Guru: Yes.

Riddi: That man is telling me this. He is asking me to go to the bosom.

Guru: You will not go to the bosom. You will have to go to the Kollesema according to what you have been saying all this time.

Riddi: Of course.

Guru: You will have to go in order to bring kapu (cotton).

Riddi: He is asking me to go and bring cotton. This is the way that I should go for it.

We are going we have to take things to eat. We will be in need of things to eat.

Guru: You have to take things to eat.

Riddi: We will be needing them.

Guru: What a story.

Riddi: Polmulak, kosmulak, delmulak

Guru: Are you going to get yourself warm by the fire? Is your man going to go there to warm himself by the fire?

Riddi: No.

Guru: No, not like that. You boil jackfruit and you tie it in a bundle. You boil dell and you tie it in a bundle/parcel.

Riddi: You scrape coconut and wrap it up.

Guru: Yes.

Riddi: You prepare everything in parcels

Guru: Yes those are the things that you will eat while on your way.

Riddi: Yes, to eat on the way?

Guru: When looking at your faces, I do not think that you two are at peace.

Riddi: *Gurunanse*, this is how it goes. Now we tie, wrap all these things in parcels and we go on the road (start the journey).

Guru: Yes.

Riddi: After that we will go to Matara.

Guru: Hmm.

Riddi: After going to Matara, I will go straight to the beach.

Guru: Are you going to go down to the beach from Matara town.

Riddi: You know, when I get down to the sea, there is a lot of water. So I will be able to drink water whenever I want to.

Guru: Yes.

Riddi: Then I will eat something, and drink water and proceed.

Guru: Yeah

Riddi: I am going to go on the bus, and I will ask my man to come to the shore.

Guru: You are asking your man to come to the beach, why?

Riddi: Well, there is a limitless amount of food available.

Guru: What do you mean, where on the beach do you find things to eat.

Riddi: There are hangampollu to be grabbed fresh from the sea, and other things. There are stringhoppers.

Guru: There are komboegahapueva. There are bammupittu.

Riddi: There is bamboo, and there is pittu.

Guru: There is the dal curry and the hangampollu.

Riddi: The dish is hot (rykende varm).

Guru: There is bibbikang (a sweet).

Riddi: So what the man has to do is to eat all that is there and drink some water and start his journey.

Guru: In this early morning, what the hell are you talking about? It is shit, how can your husband eat shit? As we talked about before you know that you have to make parcels.

Riddi: Yes, prepare parcels and peacefully leave. Firstly, secondly and thirdly go and bring cotton seeds.

The end

THE SONG OF ORIGIN OF THE SPINNING AND WEAVING OF THE CLOTH TO BUDDHA

On the waves of the seven seas, Bishava comes to spin the cotton
Having heard all these things with a certain amount of satisfaction,
To the namal bed bisava comes through the erdiya (air)
And this is the origin of the spinning of cotton yard

From the Villodi purravara (a region) all the people united,
Offered to our Buddha kattina dane (offering of a robe)

With golden decorations, the cotton seeds brought from the town
And within seven hours they created a cotton cloth

Having this in both hands, the Bishava enters with the sallue/cloth
With this sallue she comes without delay

Having the idea of all this anuhass (powers), the god arrives.
The golden casket is given to him.
With such happiness on this earth the birth of kapu (cotton) is explained

(by Bishava)

The end

Riddi: *Gurunanse*, my man (puruchea/pusa), has brought cottonseeds with hopes for the future.
Guru: He is clever is he not?
Riddi: Yes, he is wise.
Guru: You know why you bring cotton or cotton seeds?
Riddi: It is according to hopes for the future.
Guru: Your husband has done good deeds – has good karma and he is expected to be married to you forever.
Riddi: The man is saying like this now?
Guru: Yes.
Riddi: Now, these cotton seeds that we brought, the man is speaking like this.
Guru: Yes.
Riddi: The man is saying like this?
Guru: *Riddi* chena.
Riddi: You take the spade, you remove the weeds, set the chena on fire, and then cultivate the cotton sow the seeds and after they will grow.
Guru: So are you going to pluck the cotton.
Riddi: Yes, he is asking me to pluck it.

THE SONG ABOUT THE SPINNING MACHINE

They started from the city of Rammala, in the town of Pælledonne there is a golden cotton tree
In order to bring the cotton she travels through the air
On that day seven princesses bring cotton

The young and the very young princesses all got together
Without any hesitation they start to go to bring cotton
And you my husband also go with them and bring it

Tilling the soil the cottonseeds are sown
And with the two leaves the cotton seed will grow
After six months the cotton fruit will appear
In August, the small cotton can be harvested

Listen my friend, cottonseeds are sown after tilling the chena
A surrounding fence is beautifully put up
A small place will be put up for you to stay
A small piece of cloth will be woven for you to wear

Two hands are not strong enough to weave a cloth
And the two eyes cannot see to sow the cotton seeds
To borrow at least a cloth full of cottonseeds
You have to go to the forest even if it means your death

About two thousand cottonseeds became real cotton
They received much sunshine
Because of the power of the Bishava
Seven hours a day we spin cotton like this

Riddi: Gurunanse.
Guru: Yes.
Riddi: The cotton branch was destroyed. The man destroyed the cotton branch.
Guru: He destroyed the cotton branch. I do not think that you will be able to go back to that area again.
Riddi: We will not be able to go to that area again.
Guru: Child, you have come after destroying the cotton branch?
Riddi: We will not be able to go to that area again.
Guru: Yes.
Riddi: *Gurunanse*, Buddhu appachea, after removing all the weeds in the chena, after setting it on fire, after sowing the seeds, after they grow and when ripe the cottonbuds blends.
Guru: Yes.
Riddi: My man was very happy now, he had done clever work.
Guru: Yes.
Riddi: Now the man was saying this: Since the cotton is blending.
Guru: Did he swallow it?
Riddi: Something really interesting happened now. When the man saw the white cotton, beautifully hanging on the three, he said that he wanted two boxes.
Guru: Two boxes, for what?
Riddi: I do not know, he just asked for two boxes.

Guru: You have to put in two boxes.

Riddi: No, no, no, not that, the wallu pettiye – a tool used when plucking the cotton.

Guru: Wallu pettiye.

Riddi: It is for plucking the cotton. He wanted two wallu pettiye.

Guru: It is not possible without it.

Riddi: *Gurunanse*, he brought two wallu pettiye. Buddhu appachea, then he climbed the cotton trees.

Guru: He climbed the cotton tree?

Riddi: Yes, he climbed up the cotton tree.

Guru: Did you allow him to go?

Riddi: Yes.

Guru: If it was a man like me, I would not have allowed it.

Riddi: It is because I wanted the cotton to be plucked. It is because of the love I had for the man.

Guru: What happened next?

Riddi: So, he went up on the tree, and was jumping from one branch to another, from that one to this one and he was sitting on the branches.

Guru: Aha.

Riddi: He was making salto montale, acting like a monkey.

Guru: Was he showing himself off to you?

Riddi: You know, this is the thing. He was showing off his cleverness.

Guru: Ahaaa.

Riddi: He was showing his talents, so *Gurunanse*, I felt possessive (loba).

Guru: Yes.

Riddi: He was jumping from this branch to that branch.

Guru: Oh, you liked it?

Riddi: Yes he was like a monkey.

Guru: Monkey?

Riddi; Yes.

Guru: You look at his face and you call him a monkey?

Riddi: So, *Gurunanse*, I felt very possessive about him. So I pray to God often.

Guru: Oh, you evoke the gods' blessings? You loved him, right?

Riddi: Yes, I loved him too much, so I prayed to God being uncertain whether he would fall down (from the trees) and knock his head, and splinter his bones, so I often prayed to gods.

Guru: Yeah, you wanted the gods to take care of him.

Riddi: But, *Gurunanse*, the moment I said this.

Guru: What?

Riddi: Buddhu appachee. A cottonbranch broke and he lost his footing.

Guru: So it came down (the branch)?

Riddi: Now this branch came down upon his head.

Guru: So, what did you do?

Riddi: I felt such pity.

Guru: You mean you liked it?

Riddi: No, this is the thing, he was falling down while I was feeling possessive about him. Now the man was falling down, I looked around, I did not know what to do, and I saw this big black rock and I moved it to where the man had fallen and I wished that he had fallen down on it.

Guru: Aha, you moved a rock for the man to fall down on it?

Riddi: Yes, if not he would have fallen on the ground.

Guru: Yes, I guess that you were too happy about it.

Riddi: So, then he tumbled down and fell on the rock

Guru: Aha.

Riddi: After falling he splintered his elbows like bean sprouts.

Guru: Appachea. That is why bean sprouts were expensive then.

Riddi: Yes that is why bean sprouts were expensive then.

Guru: Now they sell them cheaper.

Riddi: It is not a big deal for me.

Guru: Yes.

Riddi: The man says that he will take some medication for it later and now he is asking me to dry the cotton by the riverbank because there are worms in the cotton.

TO HARVEST THE COTTON

Iddimal Bishava, having thought of collecting this ripe cotton is telling something about this with happiness
Now like the ranges of mountains, seven princesses with a nice smile coming through the air
Like the sun rise to spin cotton with their followers

TO DRY THE COTTON

Picking up bunches of this cotton in their hands, just like plucking mogono mal,
They put cotton here and there to dry it.

Then taking bunches and bunches of the cotton in their hands, and sorting out different pieces of cotton,
To dry them as soon as possible



Guru Radja and "Riddi" Somatilleka in dialogue. Meanwhile
the patient has laid down to rest

Riddi: So we dried the cotton.

Guru: Yes.

Riddi: Then he is says that we have to cut the cotton in this way.

Guru: Yes, it should be cut.

Riddi: The man is saying to go to Koratuwa.

Guru: To Koratuwa?

Riddi: Yes.

Guru: Yeah it will be good if you go to Koratuwa, you will be like a scarecrow (pambaya).

It is not Koratuwa (field) it is Moratuwa (a town).

Riddi: Then the man is speaking like this.

Guru: What?

Riddi: He is asking me to bring a Yantra.

Guru: Aha, I wonder if there are Yantras.

Riddi: No, no, not here… they tied a Yantra to Mokala ginihiri when she was young.

Guru: Mokala ginereya? What is Ginereya?

Riddi: Buddhu appache. The man got ginahereya when he was young.

Guru: Does he have to shit?

Riddi: Yes.

Guru: He must be disposing turtles as well while shitting.

Riddi: That is the reason why we have to tie a Yantra for him. I wonder if he will be able to cut that Yantra and take it?

Guru: Buddhu amme… That yantra, I do not think it will work. You will have to bring a yantra that will cut cotton.

Riddi: There is a machine (yantreya) to cut cotton.

Guru: I think that you have to ask for it at the carpenter's place.

Riddi: That is why he asked me to go to the carpenter's place in Moratuwa.

Guru: Yes, go to Moratuwa and to the carpenter's place and ask for a Yantraya (machine).

Drums

THE SONG ABOUT THE MACHINE AT THE CARPENTER'S HOUSE

To cut my pieces of cotton you go to the carpenter's house
And because he knows me well, he will give the machine to you
Ask for the machine, we do not want to give it in a rush.
The cotton was sent over to that side of the sea, when we get it we will get back the machine

The machine that was asked for by seven of them, was not given but hidden inside.
Do not cut cotton in the morning and evening
Today we will cut cotton and give it back tomorrow

They took asala wood and made a machine and kept it on two poles of jacktree
Then made two door frames and placed the cotton in the sun
And got the cotton cut very nicely, just as they wanted

Riddi: The hand went. He put his hand inside the spinning wheel.

Guru: He put the hand inside the spinning wheel, did it get caught?

Riddi: Yes, it is broken into pieces, see!

Guru: You must have been angry with the man.

Riddi: Yes, he was trying to show off his colours.

Guru: He was showing off?

Riddi: Yes, he says that he does not mind what happens to him.

Guru: He does not mind?

Riddi: He does not care about it. Now the man is asking me to remove the husks of the cotton.

Guru: What are you going to remove them with?

Riddi: He is saying that you can do it with the curry.

Guru: From the curry?

Riddi: Buddhu amme. In the noon how he waved the kulle/fan, the fish curry and the ashpumpkin curry.

Guru: Buddhu amme. With the amberella (a small sour fruit) curry as well.

Riddi: With the amberella curry, savellen donna. You have to take a curry and wave it.

Drum

SPINNING THE COTTON THREAD

With the power of a thousand eyes, and with sixty-four powers and looking after the human beings -

Mal Bishava brought a nice cloth

Early morning the lady gets up and with happiness chews betels

This tender maid is "kulle pollela" and makes threads

Riddi: So *Gurunanse*, we have removed the cotton tusk.

Guru: Yes.

Riddi: The man is asking me to do this with the cotton.

Guru: What?

Riddi: He is asking me to Wallu keranne (shred the cotton).

Guru: What do you mean by Wallu keranne?

Riddi: I do not know.

Guru: What are you doing it with?

Riddi: From a kore.

Drum

TO MEASURE THE COTTON

Looking at the husband bringing cotton from the various corners,

Bringing the cotton buds in bags and weighing them

Drum

TO ROLL THE COTTON THREAD ONTO THE REEL

My husband, you hear what I am telling you

You go to the carpenter and ask for this

When you do this you take forty leaves of betels and bring that wallukore

Riddi: So we shred the cotton (wallu kerra).

Guru: Thereafter.

Riddi: Yes, now he is asking me to do this. The cotton needs to be spun.

Guru: Spun?

Riddi: Yes, he wants to spin it.

Guru: I do not think that the man will be able to do it.

Riddi: Why is that *Gurunanse?*. Why is he saying deg deg deg deg?

Guru: I guess something must be wrong with him.

Riddi: I do not know, he is just saying deg deg deg, and he is sitting sideways.

Guru: Then maybe he has haemorrhoids in his ass.

Riddi: This is the thing *Gurunanse*, although the toilet is there all the time, this man does not go to it. In the evenings when it is dark he goes and does the job on the road.

Guru: Then he must be shitting on the road.

Riddi: Yeah, that's the way it is. He has been doing it on the road, and he has a cluster of haemorrhoids in his ass and that is why he is saying deg deg deg deg.

Guru: No it is not that. He can not speak from his mouth what he has done, so he is signalling from his ass.

Riddi: Yes, he is signalling.

Guru: Buddhu amme. He is a great wise man.

Riddi: He is asking you to spin the cotton.

Drum

SPINNING THE COTTON THREAD

Like the colourless water in the river, the cotton that is put to dry on a leaf

And is looked at carefully to see if there is any dirt, they spin cotton nicely

Riddi: So Gurunanse, we spin the thread with a tiny thread.

Guru: Tiny thread and a thick thread.

Riddi: Now the man is saying this: That I need to pour this.

Guru: Pour it where?

Riddi: He is asking me to pour it.

Guru: Into a pot?

Riddi: No, to a waune.

Guru: Riddi waune that is made out of kokonowell (a kind of creeper).



Guru Raja and Riddi Somatilleka in conversation 9 years earlier

Drum

When they are spinning this cotton,

And hiding it under the wallupatte (a woven mat),

They put it on a chair and they make available a golden piece of cloth

Riddi: So I poured the cotton from the waune.

Guru: Yes.

Riddi: Now, the man is asking me to spread out the thread

Guru: The man is asking you to do that?

Drum

WEAVING THE COTTON CLOTH

Taking the cloth piece in the right hand, taking the 64 powers from God

Showing that for seven miles the whole earth was brought to this cloth piece

The power of the idde was thrown out to the whole world

Boxes full of kikirindi mal and stretching the two hands, keeping the two legs together

As a butterfly coming to a dunnukemal without making any trouble, start spinning the cotton

Singing songs and reciting kavi and sitting at galgosawa they are spinning cotton

Blowing the vasdanda, Riddi Bishavas is seated spinning cotton

Cutting the kokulwel and in a disorderly way
Seeing sappumal and asking the husband hiniyeni to see the marked hands

Different kinds of ornaments that I have worn, my hand hurts from doing all these things
God is very sensitive and delicate to your finger
I will make golden rings to avoid sores on my hands

Eating betels and keeping and setting the cut cotton and putting it into oil and gruel
And they are strengthening the pieces

Riddi: Gurunanse, see, this is the clever work of the man.
Guru: "Appochea". What is that? What do you mean by cleverness?
Riddi: He has woven the cloth.
Guru. Æhh
Riddi: He somehow got the cloth woven.
Guru: If he did that, why is he chewing and chewing betels and spitting (kelle).
Riddi: Yes, that is what the man is saying, its kelle wella (something is wrong).
Guru: It is like that now.
Riddi: Kelle wella (something wrong).
Guru: Kelle gahala (spitting).
Riddi: Kelle wella (something wrong).
Guru: Ah.
Riddi: Gurunanse, the man is saying this. He says that he has been spitting all over the cloth. Since he chewed betels while weaving the cloth there is spit all over it.
Guru: Do you need to wash it?
Riddi: Yes it needs to be rubbed. I mean….
Guru: You need to use starch and blue powder
Riddi: Yes.
Guru: You need to do all that and get the cloth dry.
Riddi: If I tell the washerwoman she will rub the man will she not?
Guru: Well, the washerwoman is engaged in rubbing anyway.
Riddi: Yes, we need to rub it and to get it purified (pirisindu).

WASHING THE CLOTH

Putting gruel and blue powder, washing the cloth and putting it in the sunshine at the washermen's house to wash them well

Seven bishawas are putting the cloths into the sunshine to dry

To Siddhe lord Buddha they offer

Drum



Riddi Somatilleka is showing the finished piece of white cloth

Riddi: Gurunanse.

Guru: Oh, what a rub.

Riddi: That man was rubbed well.

Guru: What do you think, that he is a rock?

Riddi: No, we got the cloth woven, and we got it purified, now the man is saying this.

Guru: Yes.

Riddi: In the name of these spirits.

Guru: Yes.

Riddi: Kattine wastre (the act of giving robes for the monks). The man is asking this to be offered to the lord Buddha as a kattine wastre and the man is asking to take it off.

Guru: I do not think that you will be able to take it off the man.

Riddi: We will have to take off his limbs, as one does with crabs.
Guru: That would be something.
Riddi: The man wants to be free.

Drum

Taking the boxes full of cotton and taking the other boxes that were less full, also taken by them
And having eaten bullatt after brushing the teeth
Indoidoy mothers now you all get up

The Adura Riddi Bishava gets up and gives the cloth to the patient who puts it on her head, and the Adura chants a verse of blessing for the aturea. The patient wipes her face three times with the cloth, places it and a handful of flowers into the basket, and the Adura turns and places the offering on the top of the "flower shed".

In the cause of the events in the narrative about the grand sacrifice of Riddi Bishavas, Riddi has now conceived a child. In the next act, the power of Riddi is manifested in the body of the Adura by the following offering procedure:

5.5.10 Breaking the Dalumura – betel leaf

THE SONG OF ORIGIN OF THE DALUMURA
The god of sun, the name that was given to Pattini devi arriving from the air with all the other devis.
Saman god and I am telling you, apologising for the mistakes done if there are any
Please come over here

From the four islands around Sri Lanka and from Utturukoro island,
All those seven came from Riddi

Having our hands over our heads we are going to tell of this birth to our Buddha
This big Naga king asked who are you?
If you came from the word of humans tell me the reason why you came

Stepping into the lake of Manil (blue lotus) which was very pure
And being in the lake Buddha gave this dalumura to Nathan god.
My lord it is time to give birth after the confinement
And we are offering this dalumura and making our vow
From Indradigging the dalumura is taken, and we have brought dalumura
Dalumura which came with the Bishava, you accept this dalumura
The dalumura brought from malmadue, and here we have brought dalumura
Dalumura which came with Bishava, today you accept that dalumura.

The young Adura holds his hands on the offering stand in the centre of the mal maduva – "flower shed", the drummer and dumalla man help him into a trance while he recites the words above. His body starts shivering, he loosens his grip and dances from one stand to the other while he places the areca nut flower and a betel leaf on the top of each one. Then after he blows out incense smoke and falls to the ground. His body is now stiff and shaking, in a trance. The power of the Riddis is believed to have taken over his body. The lead Adura breaks the connection by the ritual act of cooling his body down with charmed saffron water.



The Adura is "brought back" with charms recited by the Mahachari when the "embodiment of Riddhi's spirit act" is finished.

Then nine leaves and nine coins are offered by the patient to the Mahachari, who brings them to the "flower shed" of the Riddi Bishawas. The Aduras salute the seven offering stands with their long hair held on the top of their head, while they dance honourable dance gestures. By these actions the second "act" of the midnight watch drama, the Riddi Yage, comes to an end.

5.5.11 The Nursing of the Child Act



Riddi Somatilleka and the aturea – Patient

THE NURSING OF THE CHILD ACT SONG

The infant is there at Satmode

The infant may be crying there

Can hear the crying of the baby

The Bishava got the permission to come

No sleep even in the flowery bed

Then making clothes over and even sleeping like this

Dreaming of the husband she thought of telling him

Visioned in a frightening dream

Today we do not see any good in it

Even that day we felt it was very bad

Please explain that dream to me now

In that bed sleeping

And in that flowery bed while sleeping

I saw that beautiful scene
A prince will be born with all good luck
Thought of eating sweet oranges
Shall I eat mangos ripen jackfruit and all that
Shall I eat all tasty things
Shall I tell about all these cravings to my husband
Flower leaf and water leaf, but not to eat sour leaf
The lotus from the lake can be used as ornaments
And so can the nagawalli leaves
Just like a scar in the middle of the moon
Craving to eat was felt by the Bishava
To be in the shrine for one week
Then she will feel that there is a difference
Become fatter and fatter
And will get a fat and look beautiful
The breasts will become bigger
And with all the blessings of all the gods
Waiting four months she will feel this craving

Like this she will spend her life on the bed and thinking of all comfort
After five months she will feel different again
Just like an asala flower she will look more beautiful
And will spend a comfortable time in bed

She will see or feel that her breasts are full of milk
All the seven Bishava princesses will ask about Bhuta illness
Then her body will feel rheumatic pains, when the womb is eight months old

Then eight thousand princesses will flock together
Unwanted behaviour and unkindness (not good qualities) will appear

After eight months red blue lotuses will be worn as garlands
Then ten thousand princesses will flock together again
Unwanted behaviour and unkindness will again spread out
Over and over again the cramps will be felt and stopped

After nine months she will get milk
On completing ten months you find full milk
The tips of the breasts will become dark in colour
Outside you find five hundred of them getting ready
And I also feel pains like delivery
Thousands and thousands of princesses will come
The chief midwife will come
And the infant will be lulled and rocked in both hands
And here we are telling the pattern of darunæreville (the lullaby)

From that day onward offer coins to the devil
Despite all the difficulties, I brought up this infant
On the body you find the red navel string
Do not cry my son I got you from the god
My loving son, you sucked the milk and slept like a golden image of the sun
My beautiful son, with pleasing skin – please suck the milk in my two breasts and sleep well
No bangles in two hands and no giggeri jingles on two legs
Please sleep without crying, I will come soon
Just like a flower that you find on a branch – and a petal in a beautiful flower
My son is like that, open your eyes and look at me -Baluli, baluli my son
You will have all you need to develop yourself

To explain my suffering there is nobody to help me
The crying child will be made to cry, and get them to talk
My tears flow
I am going as the infant
My person

The end

The song about the different stages in the pregnancy, and birth, is sung by the Adura who has again hidden himself behind the stage curtain inside the "flower shed" while dressing up for this act. When the song is finished the baby of Riddi is born. The Adura/Riddi enters the arena with the baby in her arms dancing the initial steps for this item. The assistant has put

out the chairs and the bath, and "Riddi" sits down and starts to bathe the child. Afterwards, she nurses him while singing a popular lullaby of her own choice. In mime, the Adura puts the baby doll head down into the jar, he drops it into the jar, he washes all the bodily openings very neatly, then the child is wrapped in a cloth from top to toe and is placed on the lap, and the Adura nurses it while singing popular songs of his own choice and engaging in a comedy dialogue with the drummer/guru.



Riddi Adura is cheeringly clapping and singing for "her" boychild

Guru: Hattwallani. It is not only the child, anyone would have been frightened.

Adura: I thought that someone was strangling the child.

Riddi: Water has gone into the head.

Guru: Do you scream like that when getting water into your head. It was not the child that screamed, it was the mother.

Adura: Buddhu amme. Have a bath, have a bath.

> Drums accompany Riddi Bishava's gestures while bathing the child, who continues to slide out of his grip.

Guru: It is impossible to take him out.

Riddi: Æhh.

Guru: Cannot take him out.

Riddi: If I put him into water he is like an eel.

Guru: The father must be the same.

Riddi: Yes, the old man is also like that.

Guru: The father is the same when he gets into the water, is he not?

Riddi: Yes, he is the same.

Adura: The father is under water all the time.

Guru: The father is an eel.

Drums

Riddi: Iyha, yak.

Guru: Appu, appu, why.

Riddi: Kakka dala (shit came out).

Guru: There is shit on his ass.

Riddi: Kakka dala.

Guru: Why should the mother be so disgusted by her own baby's shit?



Drums and Riddi Adura continues the bath while making improper gestures to the amusement of the audience.

Guru: Appu. you rubbed him as if he were on a grinding stone, oh what a mother. Are you a mother or an angama? As far as I can see, she is an angama.

Adura: See, how she rolls the baby.

Guru: What rolling!

Riddi: I was just rubbing off the water.

Guru: So, now you bathed the child.

Riddi: Yes.

Guru: Did you wipe it?

Riddi: I wiped it.

Guru: Now you have finished wiping.

Riddi: What am I supposed to do now?

Guru: You have to put powder and perfume/scent.

Riddi: Scent and powder. Where am I supposed to put it?

Guru: Do you not have scent and powder?

Riddi: You know the father is abroad.

Guru: Oh, the father is abroad?

Riddi: Yes.

Guru: How long has he been abroad?

Riddi: Now it has been three years.

Guru: How old is the baby?

Riddi: It is not even one year old.

Guru: Buddhu amme. The father has been abroad for three years. The father would bring goods would he not?

Riddi: Yes, he has told me that he will bring so many things.

Guru: Is it true? When he comes back?

Riddi: Yeah, he has told me that he will bring so many things.

Guru: Why is he bringing things?

Riddi: Buddhu amme. He said that he will bring stuff.

Guru: He must be packing a hell of a lot then.

Riddi: Yes, the father is packing up the goods now.

Guru: Ahha, it is good. He must be bringing cars is he not?

Riddi: Yes, cars and he is bringing bars.

Guru: I think the bar is better than the car.

Riddi: Yes it is good, I mean, the car is one thing and the bar is another thing.

Guru: I bet the mother will not move from the bar.

Riddi: Yes, I suppose the mother will not move from the bar. It will be difficult to restrain the father from the bar.

Guru: So the father will become the manager of the bar?

Riddi: No, no, I will become the manager of the bar.

Guru: Now, did you remember to apply powder?

Riddi: Yes.

Guru: Did you apply the eau de cologne?

Riddi: Yes, I applied the eau de cologne.

Guru: Now you have to put good pants on him.

Riddi: I have to dress him up in good pants.

Guru: Yes.

Riddi: Shall I dress him up in trousers?

Guru: Why do you not put on knickers?

Riddi: Ahh.

Guru: One about sixty inches.

Riddi: Those are big knickers.

Guru: Then both mother and the child can be inside them.

Riddi: Oh.

Guru: No it is not that, now you have to feed the child with milk.

Riddi: From where am I supposed to get the milk?

Guru: æhh.

Riddi: I am expecting to give some milk powder.

Guru: Why do you have to give him milk powder (powder=pitti)?

Riddi: Kolupitiya, Bambalapitiya, Wellampitiya,

Guru: Warakapitiya, Ambilipitiya (pitiya = field)

Riddi: Yes.

Guru: I think the best thing is Ambilipitiya.

Riddi: I think so as well.

Guru: It would give good colour to your son

Riddi: Yes.

Guru: He has a good complexion, just like his father.

Riddi: The old man is just like this.

Guru: I do not mean that, you have to give him milk.

Riddi: Give him milk?

Guru: Of course.

Drums and the Riddi Adura breastfeeds the child while the Riddi sings a lullaby.

Riddi: Amme amme, appe appe, kæva, kæva (he bit).

Guru: It is not a child, it is a killer. Is the father the same?

Riddi: The old man is the same.

Guru: Give from the other side.

Riddi: He still bites.

And the last verses of the lullaby are sung.



Riddi Somatilleka is bringing the boychild to the aturea -patient

When done, Riddi gives the he-child to the patient, who receives it and keeps it with her until the rite is finished.



The aturea – patient, with the boychild doll on her lap

There are however other versions of this offering act, and Hildburgh reports: "A devil dancer dressed in woman's clothing, and having breasts formed by stuffing out the bosom of the jacket bears in his arms a wooden doll representing a child, which he rocks to and fro as if to hush its crying. After dancing, this man goes about, from one to another of those present, collecting money (explained to me as similar to money paid to a physician) from them. When the collection has been completed, a second man, dressed to represent Kalu Yaka, who has meanwhile remained hidden from those present, suddenly gives a shout, rushes out with a second shout, and then, taking the doll from the performer who has been dancing with it, and shoving him forcibly away, gives a third shout. Then, with great courtesy, and showing much respect towards her, Kalu Yaka presents the child to the patient, who bends her head in thanks. The doll is taken by the patient round all the company present, by whom it is kissed and fondled just as if it were a real child, and it is finally taken home by the patient, to be kept in a cradle till she conceives. When conception is assured, the doll, accompanied by many presents, is returned to its owner (Adura)" (Wirtz, 1954: 184).

In some rituals the "female hand doll" collecting money act was included in the ritual procedures, but the appearance of Kalu Yaka was not performed in any of the rites that I had the chance to view. Riddi Adura instead gave the doll directly to the aturea.

The mimicry – or sympathetic magic in Frazer's terms (Taussig, 1993: 21) employed in the rite is quite literate. By reciting the song about a successful pregnancy, by acting out a scene in which that Riddi conceives a child and by trusting this child to the aturea as if it were her own, it is believed that the rite will bring about a successful delivery of the child. Riddi Bishava protects the patient with the power that she has to cure pregnant women by the boon given by Buddha after sowing, harvesting, spinning, weaving and sacrificing a white cloth to him in the previous act. The ritual drama mimics the narrative of the event believed to have taken place several thousand years ago, and by re-enacting this precious deed through ritual drama one re-enacts the generative powers involved in its divine creation. The dialogue between the drummer/guru who is playing the role of the husband of Riddi, is full of comic situations and suggests that not everything is perfect between Riddi and her husband. For example she suggests that an old man is the father of her child; she says she is

not a particularly experienced mother; she gives him "a village" to drink, and the boy child is moreover dressed in grand sized knickers. Her son's father keeps on slipping away from her, like an eel, and has been abroad for three years in order to get a car – or was he at the bar? Riddi suffers common relational problems such as lack of money, a husband who gambles and drinks and who is absent and, as we learned in the spinning of the cloth act, he is impotent. The drama themes of the Rata Yakuma comedy dialogue portrays a social world similar to the one created for the script of the play described in Chapter 3 "the ritual". The comedy dialogues of the rituals are, due to their "primary" script and space for creative innovation, eternally real.

The ritual acts of the midnight watch drama in particular are played out using feminine movements and gestures falling under the category of lake, or the female aspect of dance. The dominant rasa – aesthetic tincture – of the rite works on the "bhavas" processing feelings linked with the primary emotion of eroticism out of which the comic sentiment evolves. The primary emotions are expressed through the Bhavas performed in a dance/drama performance, and in our case, feelings such as delight – laughter in particular. Riddi Adura is vulgar, and many gestures portraying her character have explicit sexual connotations. Nonetheless the Riddi portrayed in the rite keeps a steady serene mood throughout the whole performance. Even her vulgar gestures are performed with a graceful touch. In other words, instead of playing out the madness of the insane like our patient who interrupted the performance during the symbolic human sacrifice act of the evening watch, the acts performed through the ritual drama are done with great serenity, femininity, sensuality, humour and joy. They show a kind of ideal state of being of a happy and mentally balanced mother. The theory of Bharatamuni keeps a steady focus on the inter-relation of the gestures and tinctures of the performance – the conceptual perceptions – emotions and effects. In a perfectly composed performance, all feelings should be expressed and all sentiments evoked in the audience. In this perspective, the dance/drama acts of the Rata Yakuma come up short as they dominantly deal with one out of four primary emotions – the erotic. However, the multi sensory features of the ritual performance are balancing, and even though the sincere mood dominates the dance/drama of the midnight watch some of the ritual acts are quite forceful and are fiercely played out. The offerings to the Riddi Bishawas are over by now. The offering to the Ratna Valli, the princess of the Yaka tribe of Lanka is

next to come, and as the evening watch ends with the "funeral act" of the "symbolic human sacrifice" this act is completed with the "funeral act" for the burial of the Kalu Kumare demon himself – the offering of the Kalu Kumare Baliya.

5.5.12 Offering of the Fan – Kulle to Ratna Valli

In chapter four I drew attention to the important role played by the washerwomen in relation to pregnancy, birth (and death), and mentioned that Nevill suggested that the cult of Riddi was once under the authority of priests of the washermen's caste. One way or another, Ratna Valli the queen that married the mythological ancestor of the Buddhist Sinhalese in Sri Lanka is affiliated with the Riddis – and remembered in this ritual with a short offering act.

KULLE PIDENI SONG

Hearing King Parakramabahu is living in comfort and that he is going to face a war
The announcement was sent round the country by drumbeat
Sorrow was felt for this the king who went to fight in the war
And after the war he returned in victory
To trick the princess he got the whole country to put up black flags on poles.
The Bishava seeing these black flags and feeling despair, jumped into a waterfall
When she did this a rodiya man came ahead and seeing this incident he got the Bishava back with the help of the kulle.
So, from that time the Riddi Bishava played.
And of all the gods from that time and from the washermen's caste the Bishava was not there and she did this because of former sins
And that incident is recited in these verses
From where are you coming my elephant friend? I am coming from Rohuna, elephant flower.
In hands and in legs I get the sound of giggeri, you are the chief of the Roddi-washermen's crowd
All types of patterns used by you
And dancing according to the given beat
Why are you alone in bed?
You are the chief in the washermen's clan, Ratna Valli
You are born in the Koeleme-lanka region
The back flags signalled that you have died
For whom are you searching there?
Are you trying to jump from the waterfall
Wearing white clothes with frills around the waist

Wearing a suit to dance
Reciting songs to keep the steps in rhythm
As if you Ratna Valli are coming to dance
You, who is at the foot of the hill as a member of the washermen's caste
With copper rings in your body and everything
And shaking the giggeri hands and legs
You are the chief in the rodiya clan Ratna Valli

The end

Ratna Valli appears, and dances around the arena with the fan. The aturea puts flowers into the "fan" and Ratna Valli dances around the arena scooping the flowers up in the air – spreading them about.



Ratna Valli Somatilleka dancing with the "fan"

5.5.13 Ritual Closure – the Offerings to Mahasona, Sanni Yaka and Suniyam

The ceremonial master, the Maha Chari finishes off the offerings to Mahasona and Suniyam, the patient gives her last offerings to the baskets, "wipes" disti/pillu from her face, and the Maha Chari concludes the offerings with mantras, incense and by playing the demon pipe.



The Offeringbaket to Mahasona

5.5.14 The Dance for Kalu Kumare

The Adura puts a double torch in his mouth, is charged with mantras and dumalle smoke, and drums while his body shakes and jingles, but he does not go into a trance as he does for instance in a similar act in the Mashasona Samayama rite. Then the Adura runs around the arena purifying the house, the garden and the ritual arena with puffs of incense – the torches in his mouth lighting up his path. When the place is purified he runs down to the churchyard and binds the "disti" to the place. The Maha Chari has got assistants to carry all offering baskets used throughout the rite to the churchyard, and with charms and the igaha he binds the "disti" to the ground. But before going there, he had carried out the ritual actions required for the Riddi Bishawas to leave the "flower shed" – the grand offering structure.

5.5.15 Dedication of the Kalu Kumare Baliya



The Kalu Kumare Bali

The Kalu Kumare Bali above is an iconic representation of the Yaka in its visual form. Most often a Bali is made like a two-dimensional image of a particular spirit, termite-hill clay moulded out on a banana-stem frame with a colourful finish. However, in minor rituals dealing with planetary influence, the att-bali, a hand-held icon of the sun, is more common. And both in the Rata Yakuma as well as in planetary rituals one finds mal-bali – flower-offering squares (gabbes) that differ in number according to the cosmic numerological system. The clay (metti) is magically prepared, and has life breathed into it (djivan kirima) on a small flower/light/incense altar (pahanpelle) and mantras (charms) are intoned over it. After the image is shaped and while the clay is still wet, the image is painted – ideally with natural pigments but most often with ready-made oil paint from the carpenter's store. The Bali of the Yaka Kalu Kumare (Black Prince), as explained to me by Somatilleka, images him

with four hands, a blue body and black face. He is seen riding on a human that is his cosmic vehicle. In the four corners of the Bali there are small flower-offering squares (mal-baliyas). The very banana tree frame of the clay image has a nine square (gæbbes – offering trays) design. Above Kalu Kumare's head, there are two leopard heads to be seen. A black snake wraps around his body – from his neck to his hips. At each side of the lower part of his body you find a woman that is carrying a headless child. However, the heads of these children are portrayed in two of the four hands of Kalu Kumare himself, and in his third hand he carries his weapon – a "moggare".

The clay used for the Bali is "metti", clay from the anthill of the white ant. The ant brings the earth from deep under the ground. It is regarded as having special power since the anthill of the white ant is so strong that it can survive even a flood. The Bali Adura told me that to "breathe life" into the clay, "djivan kirima" is like giving water to someone that has just fainted. After the glass of water, we have regained life. In other words, there is an "immanent" powerful potency of the clay itself which the Adura brings to life through charms.

SONG OF BLESSING TO THE BALI

In the island called Yaksegiri, in the womb of Rama-demalla Bishava
He was born with the revenge towards the devil

He brings all the tender and young girls to a state of madness by making their legs and hands shiver
And makes daha-ata sanniya mayam (patterns)

Those eighteen patterns, to make fever and headache, and to kill the infants, is the revenge from the very olden days

One attractive Adura from the very old days, who observed the Buddhist precepts well, started to cure people from all these diseases

And the eye diseases and the burning sensation of the body and all rheumatic pains can be cured with the help of Lord Buddha by giving things to this Kalu kumara baliya

In the baliya we make three cobra-hoods on top of the head, and like shaking the earth we make two panthers on two sides

On two sides holding two women which he wanted to kill, through the power of Lord Buddha please take away this Kalu Kumarea evil (dos)

Around the sea looking and seeking your visual attention, serving the god Katarangama, and through the fame of Kalu Kumarea take these offerings instantly and see that this patient is cured.

Coughs, swelling, the pale look of the body. Head-ache and all that, the evil spirits of devils (yakse roga), sorcery, madness, unconsciousness afflicting women who have not got babies, Kalu Kumarea please see that these diseases are taken away

The body is blue in colour and just like Raksea the body has a reflection. Having twists and swords in hands and having a head in one hand, here we have made this mal-baliya to you. And taking all these offerings, do something good for all of us.

The height is ten of the fingers spread, it is measured like that. And the width is also measured three and a half times of the fingers spread. Then make it beautiful by smoothing the clay.. And the particular Adura who is supposed to do this is there to do it.

The cheeks touch the neck, in hands you find the bow and the arrow and on the neck you find flower garlands. Lakal narraku is the one which he keeps up?

Beautiful women are made on both sides. They are very beautiful and shiny. They are weaving fans on both sides. This is the way the Kalu Kumarea baliya is made.

Then two women are on both sides. On their laps you find two infants. While biting the necks and mocking, touching their chest they are crying

Then the gods are placed on the top, having seen this Oddi Yakku down below. They are trying to persuade the women. And this is how it is shown.

Guessing that he was going to kill the father, he ran and hid in the bush. The helping women who saw this went to the bush and asked him to come in a certain affective way.

Feeling so sad, he he went and climbed a tall rock and jumped down thinking to kill himself

Even when these two women were crying so loudly, the two heads were broken and eaten. Seeing these symptoms by these two women, look at the way they are being seated

After having achieved the attainment, when going for a bath. Shouting at the place where the bathing is going on, holding the attained girls, please save them and relieve their diseases

Saw through the eyes of the women that they have no children, but they used to enjoy themselves so much (sexual pleasure). But they have fever and headache so much, on behalf of Lord Buddha see that it is taken away

Collection of thirty-two yaksiniande, (she devils), got 500 gottoe divided among them. Breaking heads of red cocks at the foot of baliya is the pattern of how to mould the Bali of Kalu Kumare

Conceived in the womb of leelagiri, to come over into the golden jar. Accept these offerings and save this patient

When the Buddha reached the river Neranha. And cooking sixty measures of rice and food. And was distributed, Kalu Yaka please come over here and accept this offerings

Dressed well and with pots of milk brought here, accept these with your normal wish and disti. Take away all the illnesses you find here.

Dancing in the field making sounds in the mouth and without any appreciation, sicknesses are made. Accept this offering of Samayam Baliya to you Tota Yaka

Accept these dolla baliya made of rice and offerings with a certain pride. And also the Samayam Baliya, please see that you do away with the sickness

The end

The aturea gets a lime with a flower on top in hand, connected with a thread to the Baliya and the Mahachari performs the Sirisipada – the purification from head to toe verse. While

reciting the last part of the song the Mahachari points to the joints of the body with the Igaha – removes disti/pillu between joints, head to toe and the bodily humours.

KALU KUMAREA BALI SIRISIPADE KAVI.

Doing all good to Sri Lanka, this King Kakusande Monindu was ruling Sri Lanka well.
During that time he had a son who thought of murdering him, his son was angry and full of revenge.
During the time when the king was having his bath and playing in the water
His son one day placed sticks in the water with the intention of killing him.
This mistake was not made by us my Lord king, it was a mistake made by your son Kumare, so please forgive us.

In range of this task of the prince, the king took a sword in his hand wanting to kill him, to eat his flesh.
Then the prince ran away because of the fear of the king chasing him with a sword.
Both of them fell into the water and the prince died.
Because of that, the cruel dangerous avatara Kalu Kumarea was born again, taking revenge by destroying infants

Having all respect towards this baliya, taking a full body bath from head to toe, and wearing clean clothes,
Applying sandalwood perfume and listen to this song,
Please listen to all this and accept the dolla (pleading, also cravings for different food while pregnant) by this Baliya.

Six feet in height, and six feet in length, well measured and in four corners and in the middle
All the offerings have been placed for Kalu Kumare
And in four corners flower bali is made with four models of a lion
And to this aturea we are begging you to give your support to be well and good.

With cruel face, and the forehead blue in colour and a black face covered in red blood. Lips in red, and nose in white,
Whole body in black and two hands in white,
On either hand you find golden colour,
And like this in five colours he is sitting.
Taking swords and weapons in hand, cattle, lions, peacocks and minas,
And taking people as victims, wearing beautiful ornaments numbering 64,
And having decorated the top (as a crown or something),
Having looked on hundreds of women you are drinking the blood of small infants.

On the head you find a black snake that is wrapped round the body,

And having two women on either side, with two crying babies in hand,
And breaking the necks and biting while the blood is flowing,
This type of powerful Kalu Kumarea, please protect this patient.

Very difficult and incurable illnesses are being given to them,
And to these two women with these two babies having any doubts
And their heads are broken and they are bitten and drinking the blood of them with a bad feeling in mind
And right round you find 32 Yaksini.

Having seen the painful sound (screaming), and shouting in madness
By looking at these fearful things the nerves are about to burst (naharra illippi)
And getting the headache, especially they go against their husbands
And all these things will disappear when we pay respect to a baliya like this.

Having white phlegm (as in an epileptic attack) coming out of the mouth,
Having the eyes rolling, getting stiff legs and hands, and sweating,
And when you, Prince Kalu Kumarea, see all these types of illnesses in the women
Please take them away because of this offering of the baliya.

Having applied the necessary treatments to your eyes,
And having seen all these things well, and all those things that are there in their bodies,
And having taken all the well cooked food and well prepared water,
Take all these things into your hand and throw them away from these patients having taken the offerings of this baliya

Siddhawana motomale queen,
And in her womb conceived this particular baby who is about to be born as Oddi Kumarea,
And with him walking here and there,
We hope that Kalu Kumarea will protect this patient for ever.

Like this, taking ginidjalla (the flames of the fire),
As an avatara, spreading it around, taking the blood of the two heads and getting on to the vehicle immediately
There is no one else other than you demon/god who came to Sri Lanka

In four corners of this baliya, you find decorations made with nine colours,
And in the middle of the baliya, you find nine flowers,

Nine types of rice are offered

And in the meantime among them, you find a (kanya nule) virgin thread fixed in between the baliya.

Having fixed twelve pandams and giving that kanya nule one end to the patient, and reciting a mantra,

Having read out all the verses they sprinkled a little oil on the baliya thinking that the illness would be over.

Now the pelliya paliya is done to the Baliya and offering a cock to the baliya,

And a big vessel of rice with gee, curd, treacle, honey

And because of this please do protect the aturea.

Having seen all these things, the Kalu Kumarea will come out from his chamber and take all this food,

Seeing the cock as the aturea narrabili (narra – person on earth billi –victim as a symbolic sacrifice) this devil comes and protects this person.

As in madness, the trembling of the body starts

And in the dream the patient is frightened

And the patient will keep his eyes up and a blue body asking Kalu Kumarea to make this patent safe

Always being covered in blood, and taking all privileges from Yammaradjoro,

Small children's bodies in pain and of a blue colour,

Kalu Kumarea please take all these disturbances from these infants.

Always having a slight fever and getting frightened in dreams

And always having disturbances in the belly and not having babies,

Do not get angry and do not make these disturbances,

Having seen this baliya do please try to take away these sicknesses.

In this world all are full of Yaka bunsa, and Oddi Yakku especially,

Underneath, having persuaded a nice woman, and this type of ability was there in this prince.

The father king who was in Naga Malea, did not allow his son to be the ruler,

And because the kingship ruling is not given to him, Kalu Kumarea thought of killing him,

And fixed pointed sticks in the water, could not be there because of the king.

Trying to kill the father, and because of this dangerous thought he ran to the forest.

He ran towards the forest while a lady was chasing him, and he got into the forest.

Because of the fear that he had in him, thinking that it does not matter whether it is a sin,
He ran up a very high mountain, and jumped from it to the jungle with a hopeless feeling in his heart.

Having a certain amount of pain in him, he got into the yakku vesgene, Vesamunis place,
And whenever he wants he makes illnesses for whomever he wants.

Being in that bushy forest, having a desire to eat the two heads of the two infants
And also the cock offering in one hand, in the other the sword, he is always making the babies sick.

Now look at how while shouting he breaks two heads of the two babies and eats them,
and while the women having the babies hugged themselves,
They are tired and pleading is done to see about this.

Taking the infants and biting their heads and eating, and this is the way they destroy the infants by eating, and if these things happen in the world, please see that they are staying away from such dangerous doings.

This Kalu Kumarea was born with the desire to have pleasure with beautiful women,
Because of that he destroys and kills all the infants,
And because of the merit a second prince was born.

Sprinkling water and milk, they have brought mud, clay to a good condition,
And making a frame in a good pattern, and moulding the baliya of Kalu Kumarea,
This Adura is here with the baliya.

You find 32 yaksini surrounding and in the middle the lady with disorderly hair crying,
Having all the sympathy and pain in them because they lost the two babies,
And they were weeping, crying so loudly while those Yaksinis surrounded them

The two babies who were rocked on their laps,
And the two heads of their babies were removed and eaten while the blood poured out,
The two women are crying while hitting their hands onto their breasts with great pain in their heart.
Two babies are being held close to the body/chest,
Taking one each in the two hands, while sucking the blood, mocking the women,

And please see that this sickness is over by this baliya.

While breaking the two heads of the infants,
And while eating and drinking blood,
Take this baliya and keep on the western side.

See how the two women having the two dead bodies in their hands looking how they eat the two heads so happily.

Fever, headache and the trembling of the body, belly ache and heat, killimale (menses), pains in the joints of the body, and mental disturbances, and about 60 such illnesses will be over while looking at this baliya

The heat that you get in the womb without babies,
And the illness the women get will be over when you make Bali yayage to Kalu Kumarea.

When you go to bed after puberty,
And when you get sick at a place where you find a three road junction,
You accept this baliya please Kalu Kumarea, you take away all these illnesses immediately.

When having a bath at Raddatota, (the laundry place),
And having your hair decorated with flowers,
And when Kalu Kumare saw you there he had a crush on you,
And please take away this feeling for them.

The beautiful, well prepared, pideni and the beautiful flowers, lamps,
Look at them and take away all the diseases that are with the aturea.
Having understood the blessings of Buddha,
Kalu Kumare take away all the illnesses that are there.

Having all the powers of King Vesamuni,
All the diseases that are there, do you Kalu Kumaro,
Take away all this diseases at present.

We have made the vidiya so beautiful
With all the necessary areas of interest
Please come over here and take all these offerings

And please see that you cure all these pains and complaints

Having seen several women and when they start trembling and they feel sad, and this type of disease
You Kalu Kumare try to eradicate and never allow these things to be heard.

Wearing a black coat like a big rock, you always make sick the tender maids,
And looking at them and all the diseases they have, please take them away. (The avatara as seen by the patient.)

Being in the atmosphere, guantaela, giving the women mental disturbances
Taking this offering to you Kalu Kumarea,
Any diseases that you find in the nose, please do take them away.

With the difficulty the babies in the womb, the Yakas give them unnecessary fear,
We have given you all these offerings, please see that you take out all the diseases of the mouth.

Being in so many places close to lakes and all that looking at the women bathing,
You always make the women a little mad.
With the power you got from Gurumuniyama (Buddha's blessings),
Kalu Kumare please take away all the pains in the necks.

Always you kill children and eat, and you get dolla from everywhere you go,
And with the power you have got Kalu Kumarea please see that the pains in shoulders are taken away

The rheumatic pains and the suffering, and to be seen at a distance in dreams,
Nata devi's powers we have and with that please take away the pains in two hands and two elbows.

That day taking the chances from the king, every day the offerings are given to you,
This time you Kalu Kumare please cure the diseases of the ten fingers

Enjoying the walk/play in the water
Through the feeling of happiness you got, the body becomes a little strong.
And as you were very happy at that moment,
Please see that you take away the paralysis

Speaking nice words to these beautiful women, and they start speaking nonsense,

Just like you feel very happy while looking at a lotus flower,
Please see that you take away all the pains in the chest.

Showing all the powers and taking all the pains and heats of the body,
Thinking of the Buddha's orders,
And with all the sicknesses of the belly.

Being on the top of the sea and the lakes, killing all the babies without giving them to their mothers.
Taking all your powers into hand, please take away the diseases of the thighs

Walking in the invisible sky and no birth given because of the illnesses of the womb,
Understanding the powers of the 28 Buddhas,
All the confidential, secret diseases a person has, please take them away.

The very good powers given to you and with all the offerings given to you peacefully,
And with the powers given to Sakra,
Please take away all the pains in the knees and the legs.

Being in a cave of a big rock, and giving certain troubles to people,
And the person who wears that black coat,
Please Kalu Kumarea take away all diseases of the wrist and the heel.

Taking a bath in the pure water of the lakes,
and eating the infants and finishing them, with the powers of Buddha,
Take away all the pains of the foot and the toes.

Head, neck, two hands, two shoulders, chest, intestine, eyes, thighs, knees, legs, heels, feet,
And if you find any mistakes, wrongs left out with the power of Vesamuni they must go out.

The end

The melody of the Sirisipade is enchanting and with the hundreds of neighbours and friends who had gathered for the Rata Yakuma rite gone home, the performance of this act becomes a peaceful closure of a long night watch. At last the patient sniffs on the lime – the lime

purifies "pillu" which she has held in her hand and throws it to the Bali. The Bali which after all is the image of Kalu Kumare in his funeral bed, is then taken to the churchyard and "finished" there by the Adura. The patient is then asked to go into the house, and she gets up and leaves her "bed" with the oil-lamp that has burned throughout the whole ceremony in her hand. When "safely" inside the house she gets a charmed thread tied for protection. The Adura performs the closing steps of the rite and with the last fire blows dumalla smoke, purifying the element of air and space – the ritual cure is completed.

5.5.16 The Cure

The cure for our patient from Wilpitte described in chapter 4 was a Rata Yakuma ritual. Drawing on the work of Deborah Winslow (1984) we established the link between the diagnostic process and the curing rites. In addition we looked into the social notion of "killi" – and how women, due to the "impurity" of birth and menses (killi) in particular and how the malevolent supernaturals crave blood, are particularly vulnerable to "vas dos" and "disti". I am not a psychologist, neither am I a priest of the "Tovil system", so I cannot explain how the system actually brings about a cure. Also, the phenomenological being of the Supernaturals of the Buddhist Pantheon, and how the Aduras are able to distinguish between psychosomatic disorders and illnesses with a spiritual agency is still a puzzle for me. What is for certain though is that whatever is troubling the aturea, their illness are perceived and imagined through the concepts of the cosmography and ideography of the "Tovil system". The system offers the patient a cure through the pragmatic aesthetic acts of ritual purification and the "controlling" and "binding" of pillu – the "cutting" of "pillu", through the transactions carried out between the aturea and the Supernaturals troubling his/her and works towards the end of "pleasing the mind" of the patient. It could be that in some cases the physiological explanation for the aturea's bad condition is poisoning, perhaps caused by food or ajurvedic treatments, or general malnutrition – conditions that are temporary and bring about a short period of delirium, hallucinations, convulsions etc. The ritual as a psychodrama is another popular model for the explanation of the curing capacities of the rite, i.e. it brings about revelatory images that release the person from their sufferings as suggested by Csordas (1994) in his work on charismatic healing and Kapferer in his work on the Tovil rites (Kapferer; 1983 and 1997). The psychologist Castillo has compared the

psychosomatic features of spirit possession and bipolar disorders, and concludes that both conditions are brought about by experiences of severe emotional stress. It is his opinion however that: "Though being closely related dissociative disorders, they are psychoculturally distinct, with different subjective experiences, idioms of distress, indigenous diagnoses, treatments and outcomes" (Castillo, 1994: 157). "Psycho-cultural" systems such as the "Tovils" have, according to his findings, proved to be more efficient in regard to curing than any sort of therapeutic treatment offered by Western psychiatry. His explanation for this success is the religious principle that in Sri Lanka is called "varanam", where the priests represent gods or call upon their power and demand that the spirits causing the suffering of the humans should "go away". A similar authority is not given the psychologist – the imagery of the North American psychotic which serves as his comparative example does not involves malevolent supernaturals being dispelled, and as a result the psychotic person becomes trapped in his/her "illusion". One way or the other, the Rata Yakuma and other curing rites have many times proved successful and brought about cures.

5.6 Summing Up

5.6.1 The Aesthetical Dimension of the "Tovil system": Dynamics of Continuation and Change

My research confirmed the Aduras' claim that the Natyasastra has influenced the "plane of composition" of the Rata Yakuma rite, but not in the manner that I had expected. Fragments of the text turned out to serve as the play script of some drama acts, and do not, as I presumed, instruct the movement patterns and expressions of the dance and drama acts in any significant detail when compared to other great South Indian dance/drama systems. The Natyasastra text addresses the field of aesthetics through the eyes of the dramatist and performer, and provides valuable insights into the art of creating dance/drama pieces. The Natyasastra text describes the technology of dramatic expressions (bhavas) and their emotional and sensible conceptual ideography as well as the affective responses created in the audience (rasa). In the Rata Yakuma performance the dominant emotion (rasa) "evolving in the air" is happiness, an emotion "processed" through the performance of an extensive series of aesthetic creations with the erotic sentiment at its core. In performance, dance and

gestures mediate narratives (the semiotic aspect), such as the narrative of Kalu Kumare, the Riddi Bishava's offering to Buddha and the private and social affairs of Riddi. These structure the performance script of the Rata Yakuma and are able to serve a wide range of "ends" (the pragmatic aspect), which in our case of the Rata Yakuma is the aim of restoring the order of cosmos by ordering the Yakku back to their subordinate realms and securing safe delivery of a baby, but in general some "ends" are aesthetic, some secular, some divine and others are subjective or communal. Deleuze and Guattari's general statement that: "The plane of composition, with its colours, material, and form and movement will, when aesthetically constructed, create a field of vibration autothelically perceived by our percepts and affects, our sensibility" 1996: 240), explains to a certain degree the relation between aesthetic works and the sensible. However, the Natyasastra goes a little further and provides a detailed description of the technology of the sensible. The text draws attention to the way aesthetic regimes are creations in their own right and are subjected to creative innovation by the artists, and as this work proves, the Rata Yakuma rite has developed from many different religious cults, and is influenced by a wide range of aesthetic and conceptual influences. Regardless of the "doctrinal" ideals of the system I have recorded some changes taking place on the aesthetic plane of the ritual system as the Aduras have proved to enjoy a great degree of creative freedom in regard to the aesthetic composition of the ritual acts.

6 INTRODUCING PUBLIC CULTURAL POLICY AND ITS INSTITUTIONS

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 Cultural Policy

In the first chapter I argued that the Lankan state has taken on a role formerly held by ancient kings as the patron of the arts, and that Buddhist Sinhalese culture was given preference in the politics of post-colonial governments. Many post-colonial changes of the "Tovil system" were motivated by renewed public interest in the practice, and in this chapter I will at the outset present two cases that illustrate how the royal ceremonial aspect of the system has effectively served politicians and others in need of symbolic power in their pursuit for public recognition. It is my view that governmental activities and programs have contributed to the survival of the Tovils, and after the presentation of the cases I set out to introduce the bodies through which the state patron's role is "orchestrated". In this connection a short introduction will be given to Cultural Policy, or sanskruthika, as they call "Culture" and "Cultural Policy" in Sri Lanka followed by an introduction of important governmental bodies of cultural policy and the priorities made in the field of cultural heritage, cultural identity and market regulations, and some lines of conflict thereof.

The thematic introduction of the field of cultural policy and implementing bodies is done with three goals in view:

First: This chapter sets out to present important background information for the contextualisation of the chapter to follow on the development of "Tovil dance" as a field of aesthetic practice separate from the "Tovil system" from which it originates. And as I will show in chapter 7, the Institute of Aesthetic Studies at Alfred Crescent in Colombo has played an important role in this matter as it offers professional training in "Tovil dance".

Second: "Tovil dance" forms today an important kinaesthetic (the expressive language of body postures, coordination and movement) identity marker of the ethnic Buddhist Sinhalese and has iconic status within the Buddhist Sri Lankan nation. The chapter

provides information on how this role of "Tovil dance" has been created by the state and put into play.

Third: in a period of "cease fire" between the LTTE and the Government in 2001 – 2003, there was a great reform in regard to national cultural policy. The move signalled a move for an equal status of all ethnic groups within the Lankan state. Reading this change in the view of the three phase theory of the American cultural studies theorist: Tony Bennett, (2001) on cultural diversity, I will argue that the Lankan public policy pointed towards a vision for the implementation of level two, the stage of multiculturalism, replacing the dominating religious/ethnic separatist strategies of the 1950s. However, the third phase in Tony Bennett's model, "cultural diversity", is yet to be realised in action.

The only public record that I found written in English on Sri Lankan cultural policy was made by Bandara[26] and published in 1970. Compared with his findings, the activity and programs of two of the key bodies with responsibility for the development of dance, the Department of Culture and the National Arts Council, were more or less unchanged when I visited the bodies in 2001. The argument to follow brings evidence that this situation was about to change; that with the UNP in power in 2001, came fresh visions. Another significant comparison between his and my data was that the number of dance schools (kala yatana) had increased greatly during the years from 1970–2003. As public records or academic research on Sri Lankan national cultural policy were scarce at the time of my research in 2001–2003, the basic mapping of the field which I set out to do was the first step of research into a field previously overlooked by Sri Lankan scholars. The local term for culture, "sanskruthika" can be translated as 'culture as a refined language' and this fact, as I

[26] In 1969, UNESCO commissioned a series of Studies and Documents on Cultural Policies. In the baseline document (which unfortunately I have not been able to find for reference) it is written that UNESCO should not assume the role of defining the cultural policy of states but should advise member states to integrate cultural policy into general planning: to emphasise the duty of the state to replace private initiative in the public sphere: to decentralise and delegate, but nevertheless, to ensure the administration of culture to relatively autonomous cultural institutions: and to strengthen awareness of nationhood, especially in developing counties.

will show, underlines the high importance of the language policy in the early cultural policy programs of the post-colonial state. Then I give an introduction to the history of cultural bureaucracy in Sri Lanka, its areas of operation, and implementing bodies. Finally I will look into the "bureaucratic reforms" in the cultural policy field that took place in the years 2001–2003 and argue that the change mirrored a quest for equal treatment and status for the cultural expressions of all ethnic religious groups within the Sri Lankan nation.

6.1.2 The Case of the Celebration of a Minister and The National Dance Festival

I start out, however, with two cultural performance cases of particular importance for the general argument of this thesis, which is to demonstrate the great range of cultural performances in which "Tovil dance" is deployed, and its great popularity as an art form. The cases also illustrate the power dimension of cultural performances in contemporary Buddhist popular culture. Local post-colonial politicians have, since the year of independence, taken on a public image as "kings" and "patrons". This is most apparent in their costumes – the white national dress and the position they take and are given in local social/political/religious rituals. In our example of the celebration of the minister, we move out of the temple context and look at a ritual that in its creation comes across as more "secular" than the ancient temple processions (Seneviratne, 1978) In neighbouring India, politicians also make extensive use of religious symbolism in their political campaigns and ceremonies, with Gandhi perhaps standing out as the most clearly symbolic type of politician who positioned himself through religious imagery, but the Rath Yatra campaigns of BJP and the iconography used by the leading politicians in these processions come a close second (Corbridge and Harris (2000) Van der Veer (1994), Blom Hansen (1999). Roberts (1994) argued strongly that the political ideal of the late President Premadasa, the leader of the UNP, the United National Party, was the Asokan persona – the first Buddhist king. Tambiah (1992) pursued similar ideas in his analysis of the interrelation between Buddhism and politics in the regime of Premadasa. The cases discussed stand in continuity with these findings and provide evidence that the development of ceremonies in the honour of politicians, and national celebrations are creative innovations on traditional political/religious symbolism and ritual actions. The late President Premadasa invented a totally new temple

festival for himself in Colombo – a place that lacked a temple of significant/religious importance, as it had never been the centre of any of the many historical kingdoms. His forerunners had revitalised the Buddhist "Asala Perahera" of the "Kandyan state" and the Vesak celebration, and the latest important project recorded in my own work was that President Kumaratunga (SLFP) gave support to the creation of a giant Buddhist Stupa at Katarangama. Katarangama is an ancient multi-religious place of worship in the South Eastern corner of the island and attracts hundreds of thousands of pilgrims to its yearly festival. In the same political period the government funded the development of infrastructure such as lighting, fences and roads, refurbished the pilgrim centre, established a museum at the site and strengthened the economy of the administration and the festival program. The perahera procession became more "pompous" as it was extended, with more elephants, acrobats and dancers – as well as more honourable persons. Plenty of free food was made available for pilgrims. The army had checkpoints by the entrances safeguarding the place from "terrorists".

The following cases can be read as examples of the ceremonial aspect of national politics and its cultural religious signification. The first example concerns the preparation for the first national dance festival, and the second the celebration of a minister. In regard to categories of ritual practice and ideography our examples presented here differ greatly as a festival spectacle and a ceremony of honour are conceptually different on the "plane of aesthetic composition" as well as in regard to their "pragmatic ends" in accordance with Catherine Bell's (1997) categories. For instance, the first ceremony emphasised the multi-ethnic symbolism of the Sri Lankan state; the national dance festival took it one step further and made the festival into an international event to which dance troupes from the SSARCH countries were invited. But before we get into the analysis of the concepts and ideography employed in the rites and the communal ends they served I will move directly to the presentation of the cases.

6.2 The Constitution of Power and the Nation by means of Ceremonial Actions

6.2.1 Celebrating Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs, Hon. Kodithuwakku

The celebration of the Minister of Cultural Affairs, Mr. Kodithuwakku who has a seat on the executive board of UNESCO representing Asia, took place at the John De Silva theatre on 10th of November 2003. The ceremony was a joint event sponsored by the Dep. of Cultural Affairs and the Town Hall trust as well as the John De Silva theatre – all three bodies under the authority of the Ministry of Education, Human Resources and Cultural Affairs, which Mr. Kodithuwakku chairs. Mr. Kodithuwakku has primarily a background in the education sector and is renowned for his role in the modernisation of the education system, especially for his capacity building programs at the youth council, that among other things educate dance school teachers. Mr Kodithuwakku was holding the position as a Minister of education when the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and the Ministry of Education became one in 2002. At the venue on this night, people with various relationships to the minister had gathered. In the crowd I recognized civil servants working under his command or in other parts of the public bureaucracy, University teachers, professional artists and among them quite a few nationally honoured artists as well as politicians, students, schoolchildren, journalists and friends. The organiser of the event was Mr. Laksman Perera, the Head of the Department of Cultural Affairs.

The Minister entered the venue in a procession walking up the festivity pathway which was decorated by blinking colourful lights and "gokkole arts". By the entrance there was a shed in red underneath which were placed white plastic chairs with a red low pedestal in front. Here, there were other men dressed in white national dress indicating their public role as politicians, as well as a Bhikku, and they all waited together with the Minister for the perahera, the procession, to start. At the end of the small pathway there was a torranna, an auspicious gate with a board put up bringing a welcoming message to everyone gathered. The torranna was not as "potent" as you will find in harvesting and fertility rites as its design lacked the display of tender fruits. It was nonetheless decorated with tender coconut leaves that were carefully cut in ornamental patterns, a thing which in Sri Lanka symbolises growth and fertility. Over the pathway leading all the way into the theatre hall, there were colourful

flags decorated with elephants and auspicious birds and the name of the main organising body: the Department of Cultural Affairs. From the torranna onwards there was a red carpet rolled out up to the theatre with a "side path" leading up to the flag pedestal. On the sides of the pedestal there was a row of ornamental gokkole "pots" with bursting tender coconut leaves on top.

The perahera started as a perahera should, with the loud noise of firecrackers announcing the coming of the procession. First in the procession was a group of about 30 girls wearing long dresses of blank material in either blue or yellow with a kind of rosette on their shoulders identifying them as a nationally recognized choir. Then followed a troupe of girls wearing up-country ceremonial dance dress, in white and red, dancing to the accompaniment of young male drummers of the same tradition. Looking like brides, girls danced by dressed in blank white up-country dresses, that is to say a refined short blouse with sleeves and with a cloth wrapped around the hips, cleverly made with the cloth tied up with a "harmonica-fold" at the waist. They too were followed by a troupe of up-country drummers. Then a section of low-country dancers followed, a grand troupe of male Devol Devis, and female Pattini goddesses, both parties dressed in yellow costumes since this was the colour of these deities. These young dancers were followed by a troupe of elderly male dancers dressed up as in the "telme" act of the Suniyama or Pattini rites. The "telme dance" is the dance of the god Vishnu. Then followed carriers of the national and Buddhist flags, two boys each carrying one sesat seal, as well as two boys bringing urayuddhas, a royal spear. Ves dancers of the up-country tradition, symbolising the sun with their silver plated belts, breast emblems and hats, followed by a troupe of drummers came along, just before a Hamuduro – Buddhist priest, who was walking underneath a udekudde, a grand yellow umbrella that was held up over his head. The Hamuduro was the first in the procession of the noble men dressed in white of this ceremony with the minister of honour himself of course included. All of the traditional dance acts involved were, in the religious ritual sphere, creations in the honour of and indexical with, deities ranking high in the Buddhist pantheon. In other words, the dominating iconic ideography displayed so far in the procession, signified Buddhist religion and royalty.

The honourable guests made a turn and took the red carpet pathway up to the flag pedestal where three soldiers were standing by the Buddhist, Sri Lankan and the UNESCO flag poles and a brass band from a girls college dressed in white blouses with shiny buttons, white and blue folded Scottish skirts, white knee stockings tied up by long blue silk bands crossing the legs from foot to the knee and blue "boat" hats on their heads. The band played the national anthem when three "noble men" dressed in the national dress of white skirt jacket and white sarong or trousers on their legs hoisted the flag. Then the procession proceeded into the John De Silva theatre hall, stopping by a flower light ornament made especially for this occasion – an ornament perceived as neutral to religion. The Minister as well as some politicians and civil servants directly under his command lit the lights when the drummers played a mangul bere – a traditional Buddhist sound offering, as if breathing life into the flower lights at this auspicious time. The back drop to the stage was a grid in orange colours with asymmetric ends on the sides, with flowers made out of paper put on asymmetrically chosen joints of the grid and with an image of a "humanised" sun painted on canvas as the centre piece. The sun is a sacred symbol for divine worship of all ethnic religious groups in Sri Lanka. The concert hall's audience was divided into three sections. At the front in the centre the honoured guests dressed in white national suits were seated together with a few very beautifully dressed women. The women were artists, wives of the politicians, civil servants, as well as members of various public boards in the field of arts and education. From my own viewpoint as I was seated in the audience, on the right hand side in front were about 60 honourable Bhikku, and on the other side the cultural officers and staff of the three institutions hosting this ceremony were seated. The rest of the audience, the commoners, schoolchildren, students, teachers, and the artists participating in the program were seated in the middle and back section of the auditorium.

The ceremony then started, and on the right hand side of the stage there was an edited video showing the Minister performing different ceremonial duties throughout the last year, such as the opening of a cultural centre, the opening of the literature festival, and at a political meeting for the UNP where he was seated next to the prime minister throughout most of the ceremony. The ceremony started with a welcome speech followed by the performance of a song written by the head of the department of cultural affairs and the leader of the ceremony, Mr. Laxman Perera. I must admit he was one of the only people that was known

to me at this occasion. The program then followed with what seemed endless speeches greeting the Minister and praising his personal qualities, and between each speech there was a performance of songs or dances by various popular artists. The songs promoted strong nationalistic views, praising Sinhala Buddhist heritage and values. I can only trust the Tamil translator regarding the narratives of the performances since the text was too difficult for me to follow. As the closing act of the show however, a hymn promoting unity between all ethnic groups and all nations was performed.

An interesting dance piece was that of a Baharata Natyam dance to a popular Sinhalese music piece. Bharata Natyam is an Indian dance form that the traditional dances of Sri Lanka are inspired by. In the Daily News on the 12th of November 2003, I read that dance is one of the practices that is shared between all the ethnic groups on the island. It was mentioned that the Kathakali complex of the Kerela's former kings court are very similar to the Lankan "Ves dance" as well as the low-country dance system both in regard to movement as well as costumes. As the journalist, G. Herat says: "The great link is not an adoption from each other but the soul of dance the two countries share with each other. The vigour, the rhythm, the grace as well as the aggression of movements and the splendour of colour in totality". The Bharata Natyam is another dance system of India, and its aesthetic theory was recorded in the 11th century by many or one (historians are not certain) under the name Bharata Muni. The Bharata Natyam is basically a dance of godly devotion, and I witnessed a fusion of artistic forms when I saw it performed to the rhythm of a Sinhalese pop song piece which goes very slowly (due to its aesthetic source, the Buddhist religious chant) and not with the common energetic tabla band. The dancer was dressed in a traditional sari in the distinguished Sri Lankan up-country style, and not in the traditional "deva das" dress of the art form. The concept of fusing the two art forms together in this event corresponded with the overarching policy of the ruling government – to realise a possible union between the two ethnic groups, the Sinhalese and the Tamils.

The ceremony for Hon Kodithuwakku could be seen according to Bell's categories as a rite of transition, a ceremonial rite expressing through its core symbolism the wish for prosperity, fertility and wealth, a ceremony that was intended to prepare and strengthen the

character of the Minister – to symbolically transform him from a Minister into a member of the executive board of UNESCO. The many speeches of honour, and the video commemorating his past achievements also made the event into what Bell conceives as a rite of communion, but due to the political position held by the person celebrated in the rite, her concept of a political rite also applies to this kind of event. The Hon. Minister Kodithuwakku played the central role in the whole event, and his position in the ceremony indicated and manifested his superior status among the many honourable guests in the field of arts and education in general. The celebrative concept involved the play on existing ethnic religious ideography of the existing ethnic cultural differences between the Lankan ethnic religious groups. It also played on the conception of the Buddhist Sinhalese politician's iconic/indexical continuity with ancient royalty, most strikingly through the choice of artistic creations included in the entry procession which in Sri Lanka are iconic/indexical with royalty/power and divinity. Of particular interest for the discussion to follow, was the way some specific artistic creations were presented and how, in their creation, they worked on the concept of the political goal of peace and a united ethnic/religious nation.

6.2.2 Invitation to the National Dance Festival – the Kap Situime

"The Ministry of Human Resources Development, Education and Cultural Affairs is organising a Kap planting ceremony of National Dancing festival on December 5 at 10.00 a.m. at the premises of Vihara Mahadevi Park under the patronage of the Minister of Human Resources Development, Education and Cultural Affairs, Dr. "Karunasena Kodithuwakku. The national dancing festival will be held on December 27, 28 and 29 at the premises of the Vihara Mahadevi Park with the objective of giving state patronage and protecting the pride of dancing art which symbolises the Sri Lankan Cultural Heritage, giving an opportunity to all artists to exhibit their talents in dancing and attracting more young people to dancing art. More than 4000 dancers from cultural centres of the island and dancing troupes from the six SAARC region countries will be participating in this festival. In addition, dancing troupes from up-country, low-country and Sabaragamuwa traditions, mask dancing troupes and dancing troupes of new creations will be participating in the dancing procession. A dancing show will be held throughout these three days at 07.00 p.m. at the outdoor stadium of Vihara Mahadevi Park. Dancers of cultural centres, schools, universities, and aesthetic institutions who have shown talent in all island competitions will be asked to participate".

Ad, in Daily News, 2nd of December 2003.



The regional dance competition in Galle – selection for participation at the National Dance Festival

For the second time in Lankan history, there would be a giant national dance festival for three full days in Colombo organised by the Ministry of Human Resources Development, Education and Cultural Affairs. This year, 45 national and 3 visiting dance troupes from Bangladesh, Nepal and India (the numbers finally changed slightly) were invited to perform at the evening shows as well as 6000 dancers and 800 drummers to make up the dance procession proceeding through town on the opening day. At the time for the Kap Situime rite (the planting of the milk tree rite), the selection of the 45 dance troupes to perform in the national dance festival had already been done. An administrative secretary from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, and the head of the dance panel of the Arts Council had travelled throughout the country, visited cultural centres and local dance-schools renowned in their districts for their outstanding performers, and selected the best ones from each of these. The troupes chosen were from all five regions of the country. The "conflict ridden" northeast province was represented with a dance troupe from Batticaloa. Moreover the troupes were selected on the basis of the level of performance in the three categories of traditional dance forms as well as the category of "new creations". The "judges" had in their selection of performers evaluated their level of aesthetical perfection of dance technique, musical performance, costumes and choreography.

The venue chosen for the National Dance Show, the Vihara Mahadevi Park, is located next to the National Museum, the John De Silva Memorial Theatre, the National Art Gallery, the New Town Hall and other important institutions promoting contemporary national

traditional arts. In addition to its beautiful trees where the huge “flying dogs” (bats) rest during the days and the garbage seeking crows dwell at night, and the lawn where you can see live act sculptures of young embracing couples and a collection of political monuments scattered between the many rows of flowers and flowering trees, this park contains a popular outdoor venue where popular music shows are frequently performed.

A Kap planting ceremony is, as I learned, a ritual done at the outset of major harvesting rituals (Gammaduva) in the farming areas, signalling the start of the preparations for the main rite soon to be performed. But as we learn by this case, it is also a preparatory rite appropriate for national dance festivals. A planted Kap evokes the unbreakable promise to the gods that a grand rite will be made for their enjoyment, but is also a request to the divinities to embrace the people and bestow their blessings on the land through their powers of regeneration and fertility.

Early morning on the day of the Kap planting rite, three dance teachers from the Institute of Aesthetic Studies at Alfred Crescent had come to the spot and spent the morning hours making the decorative gokkole ornaments (straw design) and stands for the pahan-pelle or mal-yahan, the light offering shed altar to be used in the ceremony. Moreover, they had made a flower-betel offering tray where the flowers, coins, lights, betel leaves and “temple rice” to be offered were to be kept and tied together, and where the two coconuts to be hung up on the Kap. A Kap is a stem of any “milk tree” ; however most often it is a stem of a jack fruit tree. The altar was placed under a very old banyan tree, a nagasse. To my knowledge “Na” is a group of ancestor spirits so the name gives the tree an indexical relationship with these. Naga (snake) loves to build its nest in these trees and is an animal considered auspicious, spiritual, vicious and powerful; an animal often hosting the spirit of ancestors and therefore subject to religious worship – but the tree is moreover of the sap tree sort, a milk tree (kirigasse). In the tree a row of textile promo banners picturing dancing girls were hung up to inform the public (and cosmic beings) about the event to come.

While waiting for the main guest, Minister Kodithuwakku, to arrive, I enjoyed the company of public servants from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs such as the administrative secretaries, the staff at the public information and documentary section, officers at the

Department of Cultural Affairs and the leader and members of the Arts Council of Ceylon dance panel. It was, in other words, not a public event as such but a ceremony conducted for and by the organisers of the festival – and of course the supernaturals addressed through the rite. The priest (kapurala) and the drummers from the institute at Alfred Crescent, had dressed up in white sarong wraps with red linings, and white turbans wrapped over their heads. The priest had also put bells and "sallambe" anklets on his feet, cotton and glam plastic pearl jewellery around his neck, and a white shawl tied round his shoulder crossing his chest and back. Minister Kodithuwakku finally arrived came in his limo-like car. He saluted his staff and the priest, and the ritual could start.



Hon. Minister Kodithuwakku is planting the "Kap"

The rite was put together with the intention of evoking the blessings of the collective of guardian deities such as Vishnu, Nathan, Pattini, Saman and Katarangama and the three superior murtiye (Brakma, Shiva and Vishnu) as well as the exalting force of the triple gem of Buddhism, and the rite itself lasted for about one hour. The rite opened with the playing of the mangul bere (auspicious drum) and the blowing of the conch shell. In other words there was a sabdha pudjava (sound offering). Simultaneously the priest lit the small oil lamps in the light shed, incense sticks, camphor cubes, "purified" the altar with the smoke of a tray with burning coal and incense powder and put up a white shawl in the roofing. The small group of worshippers stood barefoot close up to the altar with clasped hands listening to the

invocation prayers chanted to gods and goddesses. The drummers were beating the tune while the priest sang the verses, shaking and ringing his foot bells and his hand sallambe. His assistant clinked along clasping his small cymbals. After each song of prayer there was a closing series of dance steps. The Kap was then brought to the stand and Minister Kodithuwakku put it into the ground. The hole in which the kap was to be planted had been prepared beforehand, the soil dug up and purified with charmed saffron water. Small offerings were put into the hole to please the earth goddess (Prthvi) such as a coin, a betel-leaf and a burning light-wick. Two coconuts were hung up on the branch and the Kap thus transformed became a simulacrum of an erect penis. The priest recited the story of origin of the Kap and by doing this he invoked its spirit, the powers of the element of fire-controlling fertility goddess, Pattini. The noble ones among our flock were asked to light small oil-lamps to be put at the flower altar and after that the priest sang the Mal Yahan kavi (flower shed song), asking the gods humbly to accept the offerings given to them. Then it was the time for the auspicious "att pudjawa", the priestly offering of a series of hand postures and godly salutations. Again we parishioners had to take a part in the ceremony and this time a coin purified in the jar of saffron water was given to the divinities and after that all of us joined in the reciting of some Buddha gatas, engaging the powers of the triple gem; the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. The kap was then completed. A white cloth was placed on top and the jar with saffron water was pulled over it. The pot was left on top, partly covering the white cloth. With the singing of some more prayers the rite was over and a fence made out of thread and decorated with gokkole (leaves) was put up in order to prevent "impure" humans and evil spirits from approaching the altar. Godly ceremonies for blessing of a nation and the state festival, I then learned, come with a good auspicious meal (dane) shared by those observing the prayers. So before we left we had bananas, kiri bat (milk rice), kauns (oil cakes) and other goodies of the "dane" menue. Like the divinities, we were served a fragrant meal.

If the "dance festival" announced to the gods through this rite was grand and noisy, the Kap situime summoning cosmic forces for the blessing of the procession to come was contrastingly frugal and whispering. The rite was very simply formed compared with its encompassing symbolic significance. State, Religion and the (traditional) Art of Dance are, as this case illustrates, continuous entities. This case in particular is a good example of how

contemporary promoters and practitioners of traditional arts negotiate between religious and nationalist signification. The beneficial linkage with cosmic forces/state power which the traditional dance form denotes is in this context actualised. In other words public entertainment and the promotion of dance as an art form as the title the national dance festival denotes does not depart from the ancient relationship with power and religion.

The closing rite of the dance festival is therefore, as in all village rites, grand or minor, a Gara Yaka pideni (offering) and includes the performance of a mask dance item and a comedy dialogue. In the village rites this act is carried out by the Aduras – and is thus also an aesthetic compositional element of what I have described as the "Tovil system". Gara Yaka is a demon of the sea, whose karma had it that he should fall in love with his sister, Giri devi. Having an incestuous relationship with his sister, unable as he was to control this socially taboo desire, he was of course reborn as a non-noble being, as Gara Yaka. The myth has it that Gara Yaka is a demon with an enormous appetite who in one bite swallows hordes of fish. He is the manifestation of primal human hunger and greed. The following records what two Gara Yakas say in the closing part of one of the grand offering rites for their blessings in Weligama (I stress that such conversations are packed with contradictory nonsense). The Yakas promise fortunate times, pleased as they are with the offerings, but their satisfaction is temporary, and does not last indefinitely.



Gara Yakku showing off at a Deva Tovil rite

Gara Yaka 1: Did you call me?

Drummer: Yes I called you.

Gara Yaka 1: I do not have much time.

Drummer: Are you from one family?

Gara Yaka 1: No, we are from two families but have the same mother.

Guru: I wonder how many people there are in your family?

Gara Yaka 1: There are not many, only twelve people

Guru: If there are twelve members, they must look very pretty when they come together.

Gara Yaka 1: I wonder why are you asking these questions – go away – mind your own business.

Gara Yaka 2: Bring a stick to pluck some goha (pear).

Gara Yaka 1: If you get on to the goha tree you will probably fall down.

Guru: When I see your mouth I can understand that you want to pluck some goha.

Guru: Who is the eldest in your family?

Gara Yaka 1: I am the eldest.

Guru: Who is the older brother?

Gara Yaka 2: I am the older brother.

Gara Yaka 1: I am the second in the family and he is the youngest.

Gara Yaka 2: Still I am the smallest.

Guru: Who is the toughest?

Gara Yaka 1: It's me, it's me.

Gara Yaka 2: It is me that is the toughest, however much I get beaten I just keep going.

Gara Yaka 1: He is the toughest but I am the one that always get beaten. Once I got beaten up by the police.

Guru: Who is the richer of the two of you?

Gara Yaka 1: I am.

Guru: But you are not blessed with richness but barely live.

Gara Yaka 1: We are both like that. We are not beggars but barely live.

Gara Yaka 2: It does not matter to us if we are blessed with wealth or not, we just want to live.

Guru: OK, tell me who is the more clever of you two.

Gara Yaka 1: I am smarter than you

Guru: Why?

Gara Yaka 1: Because I have the biggest back.

Guru: So you are the luckiest?

Gara Yaka 1: That is why I am so thin.

Guru: Now OK, let's forget all this. I just want to tell you that we had a pudja for all the gods, to be rid of the bad omens kattawaha (malevolent speech), aswaha (malevolent glance) for all that to disappear. We have asked for blessings from all the gods, and the god's generosity, not just for kattawaha dosa, aswaha dosa but also from prete belma, yaksea belme (influence by ghosts and demons). Now the Gammadua is a long procession, since we have called you here, do we have to give you some food?

Gara Yaka 2: You have called us here to the paddy field, but we do not want anything. In fact, we are just about to go (as if offended by the act).

Guru: They are going!

Gara Yaka 2: We want to go but if you want us to stay we will stay.

Gara Yaka 1: People in the village make offerings to us, if not we would have been in the houses and they would have garadosa, yaksedosa (illness brought about by the gara yaka and other yakas) in their houses. And if a pot broke people would say that it was because of the Gara Yaka, and that when something bad happens, Gara Yaka is to blame.

Gara Yaka 1: Grant the Gara Yaka permission to leave! I have rid the place of the dorrokarrala (misfortune) but this will not last forever. Next year this land will be very fertile, bear fruits, whatever you want to use the land for it will be successful.

Gara Yaka 1: You should have another ritual in the future. The land will not be protected forever. We will be back.

Gara Yaka 2: We do not want salli (money) we just want modal (money).

Gara Yaka 1: We are going, but in order to get rid of all this play the vesadiya (demonpipe)

A drum plays while the Gara Yakas depart. The area is purified with charmed saffron water, cut limes are placed on each corner of the arena and pollutive disti cleansed with the incense smoke of dumalla. And finally three perfect rings of dumalla (incense) smoke fly up into the sky; the road between this and other worlds is purified.

With Catherine Bell's (1997) categories of cultural performances as summarised in Chapter 3, it is my view that this event can be conceptualised as a mixture of a seasonal rite, a festival, and a rite of communion. This is so because the dramaturgical concept employed is a mixture of traditional harvesting rites and temple processions. It is nonetheless dominantly a festival, which is illustrative of the French "critical theoretician" Debord's finding that a festival is a spectacle and the spectacle is a cultural performance where the social relationship between people becomes mediated by images (Debord, 1967). The organisers' idea of

including dancers from all regions of Sri Lanka as well as visitors from the SSARCH countries created a moment of mainly national but also international communion. The event thus came about in continuation with the "peace moves" between LTTE and the government in order to settle the 20-year old bloody ethnic conflict. As I had to go home for our own important yearly festival, Christmas, I was prevented from seeing the dance procession as it moved through the streets of Colombo – with dancers performing a diverse set of dance acts from the "Tovil system" and other dance forms. I nonetheless trust that it must have been quite an impressive performance as I observed some of the qualification competitions as part of my field research program.

The historical timing of this event is not without significance. The first year of the national dance festival (2002), was a year when peace between the ethnic groups in Sri Lanka was the main political issue, a ceasefire agreement signed in March 2002 indicated goodwill from the government in regard to making a policy supporting and promoting ethnical, religious and cultural equality and freedom in the country. The second year it was performed, 2003, when my example was recorded, continued in the mood of this process. A national dance show of this scale including dancers from the northern region made an important political statement. This was because due to the political situation, artists from the northern region were treated with suspicion outside their region as they could be LTTE cadres or supporters of the organisation. As I will discuss in chapters 7 and 8 in regard to the post-colonial cultural policy, the aesthetic practices at the centre of these programs have in Sri Lanka been for the benefit of the constitution of the dominating Buddhist culture, and the move to sideline the cultural practices of all ethnic groups in the contemporary cultural policy programs reflected the wish of the sitting government (UNP) to be leaders of the whole nation, not just the Buddhist Sinhalese. Dance processions have traditionally been a part of the Buddhist temple festival's peraheras (processions) or in honour of kings, queens and in the post colonial years in the honour of religious leaders and politicians, and had not earlier been conducted on this scale, nor as public street parades detached from a temple context. The move to detach the procession from the traditional temple context enabled the event to transgress conventional ethnic boundaries of the social/political/religious fractions, and to come across as an encompassing national event. The introductory "Kap situime" and the enclosing "Gara Yaka pideni" nonetheless positioned the event in continuity with traditional Buddhist religious

rituals, and as such the prosperity of the nation should be empowered by the supernaturals of the Buddhist Pantheon through the festival to come. One could perhaps see the "Kap situime" as an exclusive invitation to the divine supernaturals to protect and to "enjoy" the festival procession. In the "mortal world" the "Kap situime" rite became a public announcement of a joyful festival to come.

In regard to the question of continuation and change of the "Tovil system", these cases particularly show how "Tovil dance" is a celebratory language which constitutes and is constituted by its relation with the state and power. For instance, in the procession leading the Minister into the ceremonial hall at John DeSilva, there were dancers showing a great range of dances of the "Tovil system". In the ceremonial program a dance piece fusing the movement patterns of the Bharata Natyam (Indian/Tamil tradition) and the up-country dance style of the "Tovil system" was performed as a symbolic act for the bridging of the religious/cultural/social differences between the Tamil and Sinhalese. The national dance festival as a historical event took the status of "Tovil dance" up to a new level of "populist significance" and the very compositional form of the event fused the concepts of the "traditional" Gammaduva harvesting rites of which "Tovil dance" is an important element, a temple procession and a populist nationalistic spectacle. With these cases in mind, it is time to look into the policies and implementing bodies that I found have contributed to the position of "Tovil dance" in contemporary Buddhist Nationalist culture.

6.3 Cultural Policy

Cultural policy is a post-world war, post-colonial period invention, and served as an important tool of ruling parties in the formation of the "new nations". The field developed as a means of defining nations' distinct cultural identities – to secure high standards in education in general, preservation and conservation of local traditions and heritage, and for the development of local culture. Toby Miller and George Yudice (2002). In their work on the history of cultural policy, point out that cultural policy provided "institutional supports that channel both aesthetic creativity and collective ways of life – a bridge between the two registers" (Ibid: 1). The aesthetic register concerns aesthetic criteria and judgement thereof, while culture is viewed as a marker of social distinction and status within a social group. The anthropological register on culture concerns, in Miller and Yudice's view, language, religion,

custom, time and space – markers which distinguish a major social group as a nation. The distinction made between aesthetic creativity and the creative register in opposition to collective ways of life and the anthropological register are, for instance in the Norwegian cultural bureaucracy, actualised by the distinction made between culture and art policies, whereas the Ministry of Culture deals with the former and the National Arts Council the latter. In Miller and Yudice's model, both areas are included in the field of "cultural policy". In the Sri Lankan state in the year of 2003, the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs, the Department of Culture and the National Arts Council were the "bodies" for the administration of national "cultural policy" programs. The responsibility for the policies for the development of the "creative register" and "the anthropological register" is, as I will show, not separated between the bodies.

Tony Bennett, one of the most renounced scholars on Cultural policy issues, sees culture, as I described in Chapter 1, as: "a historically specific set of institutionally embedded relations of government in which forms of thought and conduct of extended populations are targeted for transformation – partly via the extension through the social body of forms, technique, and regimens of aesthetic and intellectual culture in relation to discourses of moral regulation" (Ibid., 1992: 26). The public battle for signifying domination in the field of "conventional moral aesthetic signification practices", is in this view linked to governmental power structures. The moral dimension of Bennett's definition links cultural systems with religion, and the religious dimension of culture has great significance in the Sri Lankan context. McGuigan (2004) balances the perspective of Bennett as his work concerns the governmental attempt to enable arts and culture to develop independently of the capitalist market, and points to the regulations by law of the "cultural industries" upheld by the state and the mediation between both private and public sponsors – patrons, in the field of education, media, sports, religion, heritage, arts and culture. Cultural policy on the level of policy missions and objective statements is in a "phenomenal world", merely an expression of intentional directedness. In order to be actualised, to direct and become reality, the intentions are dependent on communal consensus, human agency and means. In this perspective, governments are elected representatives of public consensus with agency and means for the realisation of their visions.

In the post-world war years, national identity politics were important for the establishment of most "new nations" (Pick 1988). In addition to the establishment of distinctive cultural/aesthetic expressions and practices, the field of cultural policy provided ruling parties with methods to impose censorship on the growing state and mass media and to regulate activities, expressions of opinion (through a great range of aesthetic media) and buildings in public spaces, and simultaneously secure the right to freedom of speech, creativity and social action. The agency of cultural production includes both private and public actors and has both subjective and collective ends in view. The dialectics between commercialisation of cultural forms through commodity production in the "mechanical age of reproduction" as Walter Benjamin (1936 (1999)) conceptualised the historical period, and the need for distinguished expressions of national identity led to a strengthening and development of traditional, marginal and elitist art forms through the creation of "national culture" by art/culture policies. Implementation of laws, regulations and actions, which limit the possible negative consequences of unbounded market liberalism has moreover been an important task for cultural officers. In the "west", regulation through laws on production and trade were essential acts which for instance served to prevent local antiques from reaching the global market or being exported out of the country of origin, and to secure authorship and commission on the sale and public use of artworks.

John Pick looks at cultural policy bodies outside Europe and the US from the development aid perspective, and writes that: "In pre-colonial societies traditional art forms expressed life through the mediums of sound and spectacle. Artistic expression was intimately bound up with commercial, political and religious life" (Ibid., 1988: 129). And in these forms of societies, art contributed to reality itself. In Sri Lanka, the art forms promoted by the state continue to be entwined with existing social, religious, economic and political structures. However, the "sound and spectacle practices" of Sri Lankan religious artists are highly complex standardised classical art systems. In the European tradition, Fine Arts are detached from the religious sphere and are perceived in many ways, as pure commodities esteemed for their aesthetic value or as objects or activities freed from subjective interest. As I mentioned in the introduction, this is a tradition growing out of Kant's perception of the aesthetics as a media through which one can find evidence for the existence of disinterested truths. Moreover, in this philosophical tradition, arts are perceived as semiotic/aesthetic regimes

which, in order to make sense, are dependent on their meaning producing context. Their meaning producing context however, is in constant flux and the signification and meaning of the aesthetic compositions are transgressive. Unlike the European, in the Sri Lankan context, "the religious origin of art forms" as described in chapter 1, and the ontological indexical status of religion and culture make it reasonable to say that local arts continue to contribute to reality itself. This view is supported by the doctrinal nature of traditional art forms as part of religious systems, art forms whose efficacy depends on "correctness" and "repetition" as standardised forms of expression and signification.

Pick goes on to show that in classical civilisations, artists were prized as citizens – as honorary citizens. Their fame and status were not a result of economic success, but dependent on their achievement of excellence in performance. Their status was formed by the fact that their fellow citizens wanted them, wanted to see their work, and wanted them to represent them abroad (Ibid., 1988: 6). Due to the continuation of the state as patrons of the "traditional arts", the honorary award status system at play, the lack of significant monetary support to cultural actors and their institutions, and the weak market conditions for local "cultural industries" I must conclude that the honorary citizen system of artists continue within the Lankan state. Pick also notes that it has been difficult for developing countries to prioritise arts as there are so many other needs that have to be met, a situation which is well known in Sri Lanka. However, Pick's analysis is made from the perspective of the structural transformation from a feudal system to the modern state where social class is the dominating feature of social status identification, and it does not consider the implications created by the caste/duty by birth system operating within Lankan society, which I will come back to in the next chapter.

In Sri Lanka, the building of cultural institutions started during the period of Western colonial rule. Pick stresses the fact that colonisers promoted different sorts of art forms and art theory, and implemented new forms of art/culture institutions that were foreign to the colonised subjects. Traditional cultures thus disintegrated, and were "replaced" within one or two generations by a colonial culture. What was traditional was in the view of the colonisers, assumed to have belonged to a dark age – something coarse and primitive, of interest only to Social Anthropologists. Moreover Pick states that the colonial culture was promoted

everywhere as "better", more "civilised" and of a "higher standard" than the traditional systems. The "Tovil system" should fit well into this colonial description as it is a system dealing with "evil" forces, and it is subjected to anthropological studies. But today the status of the system is, as I showed in chapters 1 and 3, one of high esteem. The "Tovil system" has gained public recognition as a revered religious practice with a distinguished classical dance system. "Tovil dance" is today integrated into the teaching and promotion institutions introduced by the "colonial masters" of the past.

The post-colonial government inherited the historical museum, the national archive and some other institutions established by the British. They also adopted the Indian/British model for cultural policy bodies and programs when the first administrative unit was established in the 1950s. The early programs expressed a wish for a public revival of the traditions related to the civilised past of the Lankan Buddhist kingdoms. With Buddhist nationalism serving as the ontology/ideology for dominating political plans of action in this historical period Buddhist religion, local art forms and heritage regained their status as more civilised and morally superior to the values of the systems of their "fallen" colony masters.

John Pick notes: "Even totalitarian governments, dedicated to total interventionism and the eradication of privacy, have found throughout the twentieth century that traditional cultures are weirdly resilient, capable of being changed only by the slow accretion of legislative control, not by instant decree. All art, however new it may seem, is finally understood by virtue of the traditions which give it meaning and significance" (Ibid., 1988: 74-75). If one accepts the resilient view of cultural change as suggested by Pick, one can question if cultural policy programs can be given agency in processes of cultural transformation at all, i.e. that cultural policy programs do little but respond to encompassing historically motivated dialectical processes. Hence, what we conceive as change, actually emerges as just another variation of the components of the rich pool of "great traditions" that cultural lifeworlds have to offer. In my view, this is because the complexity of these systems exceeds the achievements of a few generations. Discourses on the possibilities of change and transformations apart, it is a social fact that local cultural policy moves in education and culture created a reform of the "Tovil system" – in the field of "Tovil dance" in particular.

This reform affected the change of the overarching social and religious status of the system, its dramaturgical elements, and its fields of operation.

The Lankan state bureaucracy was introduced to me during research as one of the world's most complex governmental bodies, and in my experience its many officers and politically elected and honorary subjects have overlapping areas of jurisdiction. The hierarchical system of patrons/clients works through the whole system and into the social networks of the officers and politicians. The principle is socially quite inclusive. Many are engaged in the work of the Lankan state. The decision processes are thus quite informal and difficult to keep on record. In many instances personal agendas hinder efficient implementation of objectives and programs of the government. Moreover, the lack of funds strengthens the competition between the people concerned, making it difficult to come to joint agreements.

In the following I give a short introduction to important contemporary tendencies of local cultural policy programs and to the significant bodies for policy making and implementation in order to provide a backdrop for the chapter to follow on local cultural policy programs in relation to dance and its consequences for the "Tovil system". I will investigate the following: What are the important contemporary bodies in Sri Lanka that deal with "culture"? What are the different roles, functions and areas of authority between these bodies? And finally, which areas and art forms have gained preference in their programs, and why?

Ethnic identity politics, heritage management and market regulations, have been important objectives in Sri Lankan politics since the formation of the republic. In the first period, as my introductory chapter reveals, the preference for Buddhism in state governed cultural policy activities, projects and programs, as well as the public support and adoption of Buddhist religious values and practice, has transformed the local ethos, fuelled nationalist sentiments, and has transformed the urban and rural landscape with its monuments and informed the field of popular culture. The preference for Buddhist Sinhalese heritage and traditions in state programs challenged the vision of a united Sri Lanka where all ethnic groups are given equal status. In 2001, as a gesture to the ethnic minorities, when a ceasefire agreement was signed between the LTTE and the government, a policy program was formed

with the aim of securing the interests of all ethnic groups in relation to religion and culture. As the consequences of the policy move had not yet materialised when I left the island in December 2003, I ask: What are the possible social/cultural and religious effects of the move?

6.3.1 Sanskruthika. Culture as Refined Language

When I started to ask around about cultural policy in Sri Lanka among traditional artists, I was met by a uniform rejection of the existence of such a field of discourse and practice. An artist in Colombo educated in the US, claimed that there was no cultural policy at all in Sri Lanka. Many that I spoke within the circle of gallery, music and performance goers in the "modern arts scene" of Colombo, agreed with his view, saying that for the artist in Sri Lanka, cultural policy is no big deal and that their programs do not have any say in the development of the contemporary art scene. I was comforted by the fact that my friend at least knew what I was talking about. Others were puzzled by the distinction I made between arts, religion and culture in my questions, and I became aware of the lack of conceptual distinction between the three among traditional artists.

"Culture is the harvest of great civilisations", said a contemporary Arts Council Member who had also held a position in the first board of the National Arts Council of Sri Lanka. Moreover, I learned that there are two concepts in Sanskrit that are used to distinguish between the natural state of language and to its refined condition: "Prakrithi (Prakroti) and Samskrithi (Sanskruthika). Prakrithi denotes the colloquial form of language before it is refined into standardised Samskrithi. The concept Sanskruthika is used to address the field of culture in Sri Lanka, and its literary meaning is refined language. This notion of culture includes refinement of a natural state in all areas of life: religion, statecraft, arts, intellectual matters, cuisine and much more. He continued: "The definition of culture is a matter of a millennium, it cannot develop in a hurry. There is a concept that is closely connected with culture, which is that of civilisation. The civilisation is the organisation of the civilised society. And culture is the produce of the civilisation. Orderly life is essential for any kind of development". His theory on the natural organic process of growth of the civilized – civilisations concept was put forward as an explanation of why my usage of "cultural policy" was unsound. The idea of culture pursued by the Arts Council Member turned out to be

popular and informed the ontological position of many of the bureaucrats I met. Through my investigations in the "traditional arts circle", I realised that cultural politics was recognised, but under the broader concept of culture. Consequently, I was advised to drop the word 'policy' and then everyone would understand what I was asking about. In other words, the instrumental dimension of the concept of cultural policy challenged the local conception of culture.

However, the lack of public discourse on national cultural policy had another dimension as well. The Ministry of Cultural affairs was established without a parliamentary act. There was no public cultural policy act to be debated. I was put in contact with several people who could confirm that since the 1980s committees had been appointed three times by the parliament in order to solve the cultural policy issue. Talking with a Professor at the Department of Sinhalese Culture at Sri Jayewardenepura University, I learned that in 1984 a committee was put together on the initiative of the Ministry, headed by H.E.P Abeyewardena. Out of six members, there were four Sinhalese, one Muslim and one Tamil. In 1987 the report was presented to the public for comments. At the end of the year the report was submitted to the Minister, but nothing happened. A few years later, Bodhoda Premaratna was led a board to try to prepare a report anew, but the results were never presented. In 1994/1995 S.C. Samarashinge appointed a new committee, but no report came out of their meetings either. In other words, every attempt to create a public document on national cultural politics had failed and the reason for it, I was told, concerned the conflicting ethnic and religious dimension connected with culture and the arts. Another dimension mentioned was that due to the political situation the positions of the officers and board members were vulnerable as the leading politicians could get them fired or replaced without notice. Many were consequently reluctant to make any disputed decisions, i.e. to be identified with unpopular views. The public threat of violent attacks on persons expressing controversial political views of course lurks in the shadows as it is a common method of solving conflicts of opinions in Sri Lanka.

6.3.2 Cultural Policy Tendencies of 2001

My work on cultural policy is, due to the nature of the field of study and limited time and resources, fragmented. Cultural policy, arts management, and curatorial practices are not yet

taught at Lankan universities. The officers and administrators that I met working within this field were highly educated but very few had studied relevant subjects. However, skills in archaeology and conservation practices were advanced. The absence of critical intellectual discourse on cultural policy matters became a great challenge, as the information gained in fieldwork did not shed light on the questions and the narratives that I had initially taken as the point of departure of my research. Nonetheless, my research revealed some significant issues of public discourse and policy tendencies. First, the discourse between the officers working within the bureaucracy and the artists most often concerned the serious lack of public funding. Second, the many overlapping fields of responsibility and activities of the Ministry of Cultural and Religious Affairs (2001), the Department of Culture, and the National Arts Council with their informal decision structures made the bodies inefficient and, as many claimed without bringing scientifically valid evidence to the table, corrupt. Moreover, the problematic relation between religion and culture challenged the formation of a proposed separate policy/administrative unit for cultural and religious affairs. But before I get into the bureaucratic reforms that took place through my period of research between 2001 and 2003, it is necessary to take a look at the significant cultural policy bodies of the Sri Lankan state.

6.4 Administrative Units and Institutional Structures

In Sri Lanka, the creation of public culture institutions such as museums and galleries began with the work of the British colony masters. According to Bandara (1970), The National Museum was established in 1876, and the Department of Archaeology, which in 2003 was the most competent institution on local cultural history, in 1890. The Kandy Art association for the promotion of traditional artwork of the central province was founded as early as 1882. Despite its "long" history, the conservation work on the many rich archaeological heritage sites in Sri Lanka have, according to local archaeologists, just started, and the field has top priority in contemporary cultural policy programs.

However, Bandara and my informants say that the real start of a new era, the revival of local art and literature, began with the preparations for the Buddha Jayanthi, the 2500th birth anniversary of Lord Buddha in 1956. It was thus under the period of presidency of the late Solomon Bandaranaike, a man remembered for his political vision of the Sinhalese Buddhist

nation (See Tambiah 1992), that the Department of Cultural Affairs (Sanskruthike Department) was established. The Department was responsible for the planning and organisation of the "birthday celebration" of Buddha, Vesak. Today, Vesak is the greatest public celebration arranged in collaboration between the state and the Buddhist communities. In 1956, Sinhala became the public language, replacing English. According to an Arts Council Member, the first literature festival in the same year attracted a euphoric crowd of about 50 000 people, but the Sinhala-only act also sparked violent resistance from the many local Tamils who were publicly muted by this move. Moreover, the spectacular public festival of the Buddha Jayanthi played up to the Sinhalese Buddhist nationalist sentiments. I suppose it is not coincidental that the classic play Sinhabahu by Sarachandra (the local Shakespeare), about the origin of the Sinhalese "race" (people of the lion), was staged for the first time in 1956.

However, the return to the "primordial roots" of the Sinhalese has been a costly affair. In 1956 Sri Lanka was a model for the development of a modern liberal democratic republic in the South Asian region. It is a common view that a major setback in regard to economic and social development was caused by the following: the abandonment of "everything Western" on a cultural level and the implementation of a closed communist inspired economic system up to the liberalist turn and establishment of the free trade zones in 1977; the gradual decline of skills in the English language; the degradation of quality of the courses taught at schools and universities as the teachers became dependent on Sinhala-speaking intellectuals and their publications; and the lack of work opportunities for educated youth. Of course, on top of this came the ethnic issue and the social consequences of the civil war.

6.4.1 The Department of Cultural Affairs

The Department of Cultural Affairs, established in 1952, is today the administrative body of the Arts Council, which I will return to below. The department is in charge of the facilitation and implementation of national cultural policy programs and is responsible for: the National Art Gallery, John De Silva Memorial Theatre, the Sinhala dictionary office, (Buddhist) the Encyclopaedia office, Jayanthi Bookshop, The State Dance Ensemble and a Sound Studio – all bodies which predominantly address a Sinhalese Buddhist audience. Moreover, the Department administers and provides funds and resource material to the many Kalayatanas

(village dance institutes) and (Buddhist) Sunday schools (through the district councils) and a pension – honour – support scheme for artists. They give direct support for the publication of books, films etc. The Jayanthi bookshops have outlets around the country. Finally, the Department of Culture administers a pension and support scheme for artists, and serves as an impresario supplying artists for public ceremonies, awards, competitions and festivals to which dancers and other artists are engaged.

Initially the objective of the department was to promote Buddhist activities and arts, and to assist various bodies that were engaged in the creation and dissemination of the arts (Bandara 1970). Over the years, the Department has worked as a culture impresario promoting local art forms and artists both in Sri Lanka and abroad (in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Also, as intended from the start, they have organised seminars, conferences and exhibitions and supported research on Lankan culture and publications, as well as provided financial assistance to needy artists, given assistance to the district Arts Councils, published and purchased local literature, and promoted religious activity. In 2002 the most significant addition to the original objectives was a scheme to organise local and foreign pilgrimages. However, a task which was not mentioned, but which the department has undertaken is organising the many national festivals and public ceremonies that they have been arranged in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and the National Arts Council, such as the celebration of Kodithuwakku.

Bandara notes that the department should have been in charge of the religious festivals as well, but that this assignment has not been taken on by the Department of Culture. In my notes I find that the responsibility for the religious festivals lies with the district authorities, which in the case of Matara, where I did my research, would be the Cultural department at the Southern Provincial Council in Galle or the Culture Branch of the District council in Matara.

In 2003, I visited the Cultural Office for the Southern Region in Galle. At the office I met the chief officer who informed me that his office had the responsibility to fund public funerals for Buddhist monks and politicians, to support the Peraheras and other religious festivals, to organise the Baktigite (Buddhist verse of praise) competitions in relation with

Vesak as well as to provide the syllabus and books to schools and Buddhist Sunday schools, to arrange Buddhist drama exams and to do other activities promoting Buddhist culture in the region. For instance, in 2001, an all night traditional culture show where a group of my informants entertained was held to meet these aims. Furthermore the office is responsible for the yearly literature festival. There are five cultural centres in the region dealing with cultural education activities and the southern province also has its own dance troupe under their administration. Moreover, there are about 700 Sunday schools in the district of Galle alone. They also support the many Buddhist temples in the region with core funding.

6.4.2 The National Arts Council

Established in 1948[27], the Arts Council was formed on the model of the British Arts Council in order to organise a public culture program in connection with the visit of Queen Elizabeth. The Council originally had seven boards and held regular festivals of music, dance and drama, exhibitions of handicrafts, painting and sculpture, and published several journals. The boards were: Painting and Sculpture, Western and Oriental music, Dance, Handicrafts, Sinhalese drama, Tamil Drama and Western Drama. (Banadara, 1970). Bandara comments on the lack of public funds for the facilitation of the boards and their activities. According to him, in the period between 1952 and 1970, there evolved many competing boards and bodies with similar objectives. His example concerns theatre and he says that not a single one had the means required to implement their programs. The lack of funding continues to be one of the major concerns of the artists, officers, board members and others involved in the field of culture in Sri Lanka. Even though the board members and the committees nowadays receive a fee for their service, at the start the Art Council was a board of honour; the funds given to the council basically just covered the administrative cost of the board with little left for the implementation of their proposed activities. The "honour of traditional artists" scheme was started by the Department of Culture, and secures a pensioned Adura from the year of 55, with £6 – £10 in yearly allowance. The public honouring of artists continues to be a key activity for public culture bodies. The Tower Hall Foundation implemented a new scheme in 2002, and another proposed by the Culture Centre of Matara in 2003. These schemes do not provide artists with any significant funding, but public recognition is regarded as an important asset from the artist's point of view.

[27] Four years before the establishment of the Department of Culture in 1952.

According to the secretary of the Department of Culture and the National Arts Council, who are one and the same, the boards of Literature, Drama and Eastern Music are the most active boards today (in 2003). However the work of the dance panel shows a positive tendency in terms of its activity level. This is concerned with the local, regional and national dance competitions, and the latest event – the national dance festival (from 2001, replacing the proposed national dance competition of that year which was postponed repeatedly due to the political situation) and their new program on dance/drama (2003).

6.4.3 "The Ministry of Culture" and its Important Implementing Bodies

The Ministry of Culture was first formed in 1970, but without an act of parliament. Since then, the National Arts Council and the Department of Culture have been continually moved from Ministry to Ministry with overlapping fields of jurisdiction. In 1994, it was named "The Ministry of Cultural and Religious Affairs". A quote from the short history written on the homepage of the Ministry in June 2008[28] reads: "The Ministry thus named became a single Cultural Ministry again on 19.10.2000. The Religious Affairs that came under it were reassigned to three other ministries. On 14.09.2001 it was again renamed as the Ministry of Cultural and Religious Affairs and from (December) 2001 it was named as The Ministry of Human Resources Development, Education and Cultural Affairs." I learned during my fieldwork that this Ministry was founded with the objective of promoting the: "Preservation, promotion and propagation of the culture of Sri Lanka". Their implementing bodies were all linked to culture: the Department of Cultural Affairs, the Central Cultural Fund (CCF), the Department of Archaeology, the Department of National Museums, the Galle Heritage Foundation and the UNESCO National Commission and the Tower Hall Theatre Foundation. Then there were the Public Performance Board and The National Film Corporation. The CCF is the key administrative unit for the cultural heritage programs, but they also administer the funding of the "Southern Dance Troupe", the staff at the many Culture Centres (Sanskruthike Madjastanis), and much more. The fund should be run on the "arms length principle" from the government, i.e. free from political interests and prejudices, but both the President and the Prime Minister and their secretary were board members in 2003. The CCF works in close collaboration with specialists at the Department of

[28]http://www.cultural.gov.lk

Archaeology. The director of the Department of Archaeology is also a board member in CCF. The Galle Heritage Foundation was a newcomer during my research, and a body that had the responsibility for the conservation – preservation of a medieval fort in the South built by the Dutch during their period of colonial rule of the province. The Galle fort had achieved status as a site on the UNESCO world heritage list. The reason why it was formed as a separate organisation concerned the bookkeeping and reporting demands from its international funding partners. The Tower Hall Foundation runs a theatre house, and a support program for local artists. The Public Performance Board secures the "moral value" standard on public performances through their censorship practice – the National Film Corporation provides support for local film production. The operative tasks of the Department of Culture are addressed above.

6.4.4 The Presidential Fund

The Presidential Fund, which was created by President Kumaratunga during my research period (1996), is something I have not investigated. But what I know is that it operates independently of the bodies mentioned above. The fund has its own system of public awards, public ceremonies, and direct funding of different cultural/religious programs. It regularly uses the Bandaranaike Memory International Conference Hall in Colombo as the location for its activities. I know that the President has been responsible for the refurbishment of the pilgrim facilities and temples at Katarangama – the fences, the lights and the grand perahera (temple procession), which evolved throughout my own fieldwork period in 1996 – 1999. The project was motivated by the Bandaranaike family's devotion to the god Katarangama, and was put into effect under the rule of President Kumaratunge. I also know some Aduras who have been honoured by the president for their artistic achievements and an artist who has had his productions and private needs covered by the fund.

6.4.5 International Co-operation

After its communist leanings in its early independent years in regard to partnerships made for national culture agreements[29], Sri Lanka seems to have changed orientation and now emphasises co-operation with the SAARC – the South Asian Association for Regional

[29] In the mid 1970s, the government made agreements with countries like Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Cuba and Romania. However, the first agreement was signed with the Russian Federation in 1958.

Cooperation, which includes countries such as Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh. The agreements with China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Korea, Vietnam, Philippines, as well as other Theravada Buddhist nations such as Japan and Thailand are also active. Nonetheless, the closest relationships in the field of public culture are, according to an administrative leader at the Ministry of Culture whom I interviewed in 2003, made with Indian partners to which administrative staff, specialists and students go for training and fieldtrips. The Ministry facilitates pilgrimages to India where Buddha Gaya in North India is a popular destination for local devotees. Moreover, many Sri Lankans are educated in India, including artists. In Colombo mainly, the embassies of Russia, the UK, France, the USA, Canada, Netherlands, Norway and Germany are active sponsors and facilitators of cultural events. But the embassies are also sponsors of cultural exchange and cultural development programs. The culture centres of the Indian embassy, British Council, Goethe institute and Alliance Françoise and the Russian Embassy offer regular programs in Kandy and Colombo with visiting and local artists.

Summing up, the roles of the National Arts Council, Department of Culture and Ministry of Culture are as follows The Arts Council and the Department of Culture are the bodies with the longest history in the Sri Lankan cultural policy bureaucracy and their work has been quite intertwined from its very start as the Department of Culture served as the administrative unit of the National Arts Council. The Central Cultural Fund, which was established in 1981, plays a key role in the facilitation of local cultural projects and in the preservation of the national heritage. Their work is highly politicized as the ancient Buddhist heritage sites are inside and on the borderline of the "un-cleared areas" of the civil war – the territory of the Tamil homeland which the LTTE is leading the fight for. The Ministry of Culture that has been subjected to political change and processes to a greater degree than the other bodies, and has seen continual change of political leadership and officers. An historical documentation of these bodies is yet to be written. However, one field of continuation is that the responsibility for culture and "Buddhism" has more or less, since Sri Lanka became a republic in 1972 and a new constitution was made which took Buddhism as the state religion, been under the authority of the same minister. This fact mirrors the superior position given Buddhism in the cultural policy programs.

6.4.6 The Promotion and Preservation Strategies Tendency

H.H. Bandara (1970) notes that the introduction of indigenous music into the universities and schools was heavily debated. The question of authenticity in relation with the arts was of major concern in this historical period. The controversy centred on whether the "authenticity" of the songs would be lost by converting an "oral tradition" into a systematically studied one. As he says: "Those holding this view also suggest that the best way to protect and preserve the country's indigenous music is to leave it untouched so that it will have a natural growth". (Ibid., 1970: 40). The word "development" was up to 2002 not used in the mission statement of either the Department of Cultural Affairs, nor the Ministry of Culture. Instead, the field of material (tangible) culture had seemingly served as the key model for early local cultural policy programs. To preserve, and to promote the "traditional art forms", as they were all unchangeable objects, was pursued in the field of "intangible culture" as well. I emphasise that the word "development" is not totally absent, but that my example serves to illustrate a hegemonic tendency. For instance, the word "development" is used in the initial mission statement of the Arts Council. However, the documentation and preservation of local art forms, which are the other key missions, have gained preference in their activities. In 2002, there was a change and the development of modern and traditional arts and crafts became an objective for the work of the Department of Culture. An Arts Council Member explained the lack of focus on development in the programs in terms of the Buddhist principle of evolution, which is qualitatively different from the Christian belief in creation. It is a view which correlates with the "primordial" status of culture, discussed in the introduction.

6.4.7 Language, Dance, Heritage and the Buddhist Subject

The Sinhala language policy of the government has since the "Sinhala-Only act" of 1956, without doubt been the most important policy move for the constitution of "the Sinhalese" as a united ethnic group. As indicated above, the Buddhist clergy in Sri Lanka spoke and speak Sinhalese. The high version of the language was before the "Sinhala Only Act", just known to the "educated elite" and the clergy. But through the language reform it was made public. As I do not read Sinhala (I only speak it) I did not experience the complicated translations between written and spoken Sinhala. Local friends complained however that they could not get the daily national news from the TV as it was given in "High Sinhala",

which they claimed was incomprehensible. An officer at the Sinhala Dictionary office told me in 2003 that they had just completed their work. The department is under the authority of the Department of Culture, and started the work of creating the dictionary in 1956. In other words, the implementation of the "Sinhala-Only Act" has not just been difficult for the non-Sinhala speaking minorities as it is a highly complex language to master also for the "native Sinhala speaker". The language itself is difficult to learn – its "high" written form is distinct from the spoken language. But, the complicated task of creating a Sinhala dictionary is now finished. In other words the language of Sinhala is rooted in the religion of Buddhism and consequently it cannot be separated from Buddhism and Buddhist Sinhalese identity. The common explanation today of why the Sinhala only act was formally amended first in 1987, was that the government had no monetary resources available for equal implementation of the two languages, Tamil and Sinhala, in the public administration. In 2001 this was still considered a problem, and I was recently told that a program for the teaching of English at all school levels is being implemented (2008), but Tamil is still a foreign language for most Sinhalese. But as I will return to below, in 2003 some actions were taken in order to make public information accessible for English, Sinhalese and Tamil speakers.

Body language and spoken language form distinctive kinetic/semiotic systems, which are powerful expressions of cultural identity, and which define the self, a community from "the other". So in addition to the emphasis on language, the field of dance – seen as bodily movement forming a kinetic regime mediating social (ethnic religious) identity – has in the post colonial period been important in the shaping of the Sri Lankan subject. The village dance traditions such as "Tovil dance" are today very popular – and there are more than 1200 village dance schools teaching "low-country", "Saburugamuwa" and "up-country" dancing. In comparison, in 1960 there were about 120 Kalayatanas registered at the Department of Culture. Many dance schools, in addition to the three core traditions, offer classes in classical Indian dance. Indian dance was introduced to Sri Lankan dancers throughout the last century, and gained great popularity as it is more feminine than the local traditions which were developed by men, and which, up to the last century, were also just danced by men. In the field I met many female Sinhalese students learning "Indian dance". In Sri Lanka there are very few Tamils learning "low-country", "Saburugamuwa" or "up-

country" dance. In this respect my Tamil assistant was different. The dancers perform in the many public/religious festivals, shows and ceremonies. The great number of dancers has totally transformed the spectacular effect of the many Peraheras – temple processions at religious festivals (Seneviratne 1978).

The most important Buddhist heritage sites in Sri Lanka are the ruins of the first Sri Lankan Buddhist kingdom of Anhuradhapura where you supposedly find one of the oldest "bo-trees" in the world, the ruins of the Buddhist kingdom at Pollunaruva with its cluster of beautifully carved rock statues of Buddha, and the many abandoned sculptures of Hindu god worship. The third main site of the Buddhist triangle is the collection of very much intact buildings of the kingdom of Kandy, with the temple of Buddha's tooth in the centre of the town. Otherwise the cave paintings in Dambulla, the rock fortress of a Buddhist king, Sigiriya and the footprint of Buddha at "Sri Pada" are well kept places of worship maintained by the state. A case which illustrates the intertwined dialectics between the public cultural heritage management and "Buddhist" identity politics is given by Bandara (1970), who identifies the problem that occurred in relation to the fact that the Buddhist heritage sites in the cultural triangle are not "museal monuments" which the program initially drafted by UNESCO assumed, but sacred sites of worship. And as a survey in 2002 revealed, just 10 percent of those visiting these sites are foreign tourists; the majority are local pilgrims. But there are also a growing crowd of Indian pilgrims visiting, so the situation is changing. The CCF, which administrates the work at the heritage sites of the "cultural triangle" and more, has integrated the "pilgrimage centre status" in their programs for further development of the sites.

The priority given to heritage, language, literature and theatre and "traditional dance" in national cultural policy programs, has been a powerful agent in the constitution of the "distinct" Sinhala Buddhist identity. The dialectics of this process are of course more complex than the above illuminates, and my point is just to bring attention to the significant interrelationship between Buddhist nationalism, Public Cultural Policy and the constitution of the modern Sinhalese Buddhist subjects.

6.5 Cultural Policy Reforms of 2001–2003

The civil war between the Tamils and Sinhalese, and the in-between situation for the Tamil speaking Muslim populations in the contested villages, were of major political concern during my fieldwork in Sri Lanka. As I mentioned in chapter 3, in December 2001 the UNP took over the government, replacing the SLFP, and with this change a major peace movement began in the country. In the aftermath of the signing of the ceasefire agreement between the LTTE and the Government in February 2002 there were peace talks, peace negotiations, peace monitoring missions, peace solutions, peace moves, peace meetings, peace marches, peace pilgrimages, peace concerts, even a peace train, plenty of "social multi ethnic gatherings" and many other so-called peaceful projects taking place countrywide. The Norwegian-brokered agreement brought hopes for an end to the civil war. In order to accomplish this goal and to signal a new era in regard to equal treatment of all four publicly recognised fields of religious practice, the new government made some bureaucratic changes.

6.5.1 The Ethnic Issue

Sri Lanka has for centuries been a multi cultural island and today "ethnic/religious" groups such as the Vedda, Tamils, Hindus, Sinhalese, Buddhists, Christians, Burghers, Muslims, and Moors are official categories. The ethnic religious distinction is common in everyday academic and public discourse, and the National Survey Department has made each group's size and "spatial occupation" public. In the South Asian context however, Sri Lanka is a small island with a small population. The language of the Sinhalese, Sinhala, developed in a historical period of North Indian invasion and Buddhist conversion, and it has since lost its position as the dominant public language. The "absurd" Sri Lankan conception of the possibility of the existence of a "Tamil Buddhist", I suggest, is directly related to the link between Buddhist scriptures which were originally written down in Pali, and the Sanskrit-based language Sinhala. "High Sinhala" was first and foremost known, developed, and passed on by the Buddhist clergy. Its many codified forms were created for the codification of the hierarchical positions between the clergy, the king, aristocrats and the commoners through entitlement and speech within the ancient kingdoms. Although a majority in Sri Lanka, the ethnic Sinhalese form a minority in the South Asian and global context. However, the Muslims and Tamils which are ethnic minorities in Sri Lanka, are linked with a considerable many "others" in the South Indian – South Asian context. Thus for the

Sinhalese, as was explained to me by an officer at the Ministry of Cultural and Religious Affairs in 2002, to protect and to promote their "unique" Buddhist traditions, heritage and culture was their obligation for the emancipation of a culturally plural world. The cultural regimes, social and religious systems supported by and constituting the ethnic groups, are in my view not as important as the kinship (caste/clan) systems and the territorial reference which the ethnic labels denote. Cultural/religious variables are nonetheless important for the way local social identities are constituted and played out and negotiated in the public sphere. My studies on ritual practices, exemplified here by the Rata Yakuma rite, revealed the innovative and dialectic nature of the many local art forms; not only in the concepts employed for the creation of the rites, but also in their status as "traditions" of distinct "ethnic" religious groups.

The hybrid features of Sri Lankan culture, as shown through our example of the "Tovil system" discussed in chapter 4 and 5, are highly complex and show that the "Buddhist state" movement that started out with the Aryan invasion led by Asoka's son Mahinda in the 3rd century B.C. has been continuously influenced by competing "civilisation projects". It is a fact that the islanders engaged with globalisation processes millennia before the period of European colonisation. Multiculturalism, which in my interpretation is the co-existence and dialectical relation between distinct social/religious/cultural worlds in one place, was a social fact long before colonial rule of the island began. The historical inhabitants played a part in at least four great civilisation projects, namely the Aryan Vedic, the Dravidic, the Modernist Colonial and the contemporary post-colonial "Socialistic-Republican-Liberalistic-Nationalistic-Buddhist-State project". Consequently, Lankans have a long history of resistance towards foreign rule and cultural influence, and have developed many resistance strategies, which the contemporary national cultural policy programs can be viewed as continuing. That there is no "pure" Sinhalese Buddhist culture in Sri Lanka has however been one of great challenges for those representing the hardliner Sinhalese Buddhist nationalist position in politics. I was told this by a central officer at the Ministry of Culture who was familiar with the differences of opinion aroused by the aim and the problem of putting the vision into practice in 2002. Moreover she said that there is a concern among the politicians that they have to change their orientation from a Sri Lankan state towards a Sri Lankan nation – a term which they regard as more inclusive. They were also concerned that

they have to change the local discourses from cultural, religious and social differences towards their similarities in order to enable the creation of an inclusive common nation for all Lankans. They are however still very concerned about Buddhism, "in its pure form", like the Tovils which have not blended with Hindu practices. When I asked her what genuine local cultural practices should be preserved and promoted in regard to the uniqueness of the heritage of Muslim and Tamil religious culture, she became quiet for a while and said: "the biggest challenge for the local cultural policy is to prevent more influence from the West".

6.5.2 The Quest for Cultural Diversity. Reforms in Cultural Bureaucracy and Policy Objectives

During my research in 2001 – 2002 the preservation and promotion of Sri Lankan cultural heritage was the key purpose of the then named Ministry of Culture and Buddhist Affairs. An international UNESCO report, "Our creative diversity" (1995), pointed out how important the distribution of commodities, culture and art have become as political instruments. The Sri Lankan policy move correlates with the UNESCO convention that eventually came out of the conference report ten years later, on Cultural Diversity in which to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions was the first objective. However, to "protect" and to "preserve" cultural expressions entails slightly different approaches. The first emphasises facilitation and social recognition of cultural/religious/artistic-aesthetic practice; the latter emphasises standardisation and regulation of these systems. In the same political period the cultural bureaucracy was reformed and when I started investigating cultural policy matters in Sri Lanka in 2001, the name of the Ministry dealing with national cultural policy was the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs. In 2002 the name changed to the Ministry of Culture – Religion and International Affairs. Then in 2003, I visited the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Education and Cultural Affairs. Cultural affairs had taken a "neutral" stand towards religious affiliation. The inclusion of all the four public ethnic/religious/cultural fields into policy programs of 2003 was transformative compared to the policies of 2002. As I will argue, the cultural policy programs had changed – they had embraced the multicultural "equal treatment" phase in the model of Tony Bennett (2001) which I will come back to below.

In regard to public concerns for ethnic religious culture in the state, in 2001, there was, in addition to the Ministry of Cultural and Religious Affairs, already a Ministry of Buddha Sasana dealing with matters concerning the temples and the clergy. I myself was in touch with this Ministry of Buddha Sasana when I started my work in Sri Lanka in order to get an extended visa permit, but back then the Minister considered a study on the Tovils as an un-noble cause and I received my research permit from the Minister of Education instead. The refusal was because I was not in Sri Lanka to study Buddhism as a religiously devoted person, i.e. I was not studying "doctrinal" Buddhism, but was there as an anthropologist. Moreover, in Colombo there is a Ministry of Hindu Religious and Cultural Affairs with the responsibility for supporting the temples, pilgrimages, religious festivals etc. When I visited them, the Ministry had not, like the Ministry of Culture and Buddhist Affairs, emphasised activities for the development of Hindu art forms and culture in their programs. According to them, the responsibility for the arts was fully in the hands of the Arts Council. The Arts Council however, which was under the administration of the Department of Culture at the Ministry of Culture and Buddhist Affairs, has since its formation in 1952 had a mandate for the development of Tamil dance/drama, Sinhalese dance/drama, Western dance/drama and Oriental music. However, the most active boards up to 2003 had given preference to art forms affiliated with Buddhist Sinhalese identity. Some even argued that it was not just Buddhist Sinhalese culture/art forms that had gained priority, but that it was the "artistic traditions" of the "up-country" which had achieved the greatest publicity and which were "Iconic" for the Sinhalese Buddhists, a fact that will be elaborated on in chapter 7. I suppose the problem for the Arts Council is that they have worked as an honorary board, and have not really had any significant means available for the development of their art forms.

In January 2002, the cease-fire agreement was signed, and in addition to the formation of the "religion" -neutral Cultural Ministry, for the first time the Ministry in charge of Cultural Affairs was formed with a governmental act. As referred to above, there had been several boards put together by former governments in order to create a background document for an act on cultural policy, particularly in the 1980s, but the ethnic conflict had made it impossible to agree to a joint policy for the benefit for all parties. In addition, Buddhism was publicly no longer the key objective of national cultural policy programs. The UNP government had not only made a distinction between cultural and religious matters, but the

government had additionally formed a separate Ministry of Muslim Affairs and a Ministry of Christian Affairs, and saw that all ethnic groups art forms were represented in the boards of the Arts Council.

Interviews with cultural officers in 2003 made me understand however that activities and methods for an efficient implementation of the mission were yet to be realised in action. As the head of the Department of Culture said in his speech at John DeSilva in October 2003, they had the responsibility for all ethnic religious art forms, no longer just the Buddhist. Moreover, he said: "If some identity or originality can be portrayed, it can only be done through the art forms. It cannot be done through our facial features or clothes, but identity can only be formed through the field of arts. What differentiates us from other Asians and other people is arts. Because of globalisation everything is mixed, it is only through arts that this identity comes out and is portrayed as a Lankan identity. That is a great honour that has been built by various senior artists, among them our guests of honour tonight. Wherever the Sri Lankan drum is heard you can immediately say that this instrument is from Sri Lanka. Similarly, through the kavis or the folk songs, immediately the identity of Lankans is clear. Also in the style of painting there is a strong recognition of Sri Lankanness due to the reference to the ancient temple paintings"

Dance/drumming (dance directs the beat of the drum), Songs and Fine Arts are in other words conceived as vehicles showing the genuine identity of the ethnic groups. The artists of honour have an influence on art production and thus also on significant identity production. To continue the work as patrons for the arts through a system of honour, public affiliation and recognition the state hopes to bring about a continuation of their distinguished cultural identity. Mr Laxman Perera continued: "So, including all the art forms that we will see today we can thank our seniors that are with us today; our respect and honour goes to them for creating our identity. We have nothing else to secure our identity with; all we are left with is our dance, our kavi (songs) and paintings. So it is our duty to protect our artists as the greatest citizens of SL. This should be our goal. We have taken various steps to pursue these goals. We have various other plans like this to honour, promote and benefit artists and our traditional art forms." He also said that: "At the Department of Cultural affairs, we have also been given the responsibility for Hindu, Muslim and Christian affairs. So, apart from the

main cultural affairs (Buddhist) we have also been given subsidiary ones with the various religious groups so it is a big task for us. Thus it is difficult to say what falls under our responsibility and what does not because culture is something that goes to the roots of human behaviour. The habit of all human behaviour is a part of culture. So we have to get involved in all these areas; development, preservation and promotion of the arts. Everything we do from birth to death is connected with this part of culture, we have to preserve and protect culture, we are committed to this, and we have to do this within the limited resources that we are given. But within this we try to do our very best to carry out our responsibilities". In other words, from then on, at least on paper – each of the ethnic groups should have received equal treatment and should have held equal positions in the field of cultural/religious/arts. But the speech of Perera revealed that he and his staff had taken on a new area of responsibility. The same tendency was conceptualised in the program for the celebration of Hon. Minister Kodithuwakku.

6.5.3 The 100 days program of UNP, January 2002

In 2002, the Department of Culture was involved in the implementation of the 100 days programme of the new government, a program supporting a religiously neutral cultural policy. A copy of the program was given to me by an officer, and its aim was to: "generate new cultural enlightenment throughout the whole island". In order to reach this overarching goal, throughout this period, 30 new culture centres – "Sanskruthike Madjastani" were to be set up. "This island-wide project was initiated in the latter part of the year 1998 at Divisional Secretarial level for the effective implementation of the cultural conservation, promotion and expansion with a view to making use of the culture for the purpose of a value-based development"[30]. The UNP thus continued the building program started by their predecessors, the SLFP. The government had placed the responsibility for the administration of the staff running each one of the Culture Centres at CCF, and this responsibility included the financing of the buildings and the facilitation of each centre with musical instruments, books, sports equipment etc. Seminars by support persons were also scheduled. I was told in an interview with one of the cultural officers that the centres were set up as an attempt at depoliticising culture – strengthening civil society and reducing violence. Additionally, the cultural bodies under the authority of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs should contribute

[30] http://www.cultural.gov.lk/

through individual programs to "the upliftment for Arts and Culture". Another program put into operation during my research period, was the national artist identity card scheme issued by the Tower Hall Foundation to artists acknowledged by the state. Simultaneously a new support scheme for selected artists was implemented; again one that did not provide any significant income to the artists. The card, I was told, was supposed to secure the artists special treatment and service from public bodies in a similar manner to the treatment given the soldiers of the army. Moreover, the Rajangana and Anhuradhapura archaeological sites were to be further developed. Both sites are located in the border areas of the "unclear zones" of the civil war. I know that NORAD sponsored, as a part of their peace process program, the translation of all information at the heritage sites administered by the CCF into Sinhala, English and Tamil. The Ministry proposed in this program support for the implementation of a similar information strategy at the Colombo National Museum.

Through the Culture Centre project, the state only took on the responsibility for the facilitation of the activities. From the head of the Matara Culture Centre I learned that this caused many problems for the daily administration of the centre. What was paid for was the maintenance of the building and the salary of the administrative staff at the centre only. At the Culture Centre in Matara alone, 13 officers were employed. The centre did not receive any support for daily administration, not even payment of the telephone bill (the phone was then cut off), or for the copy machine etc. Nor was there any support available to pay teachers at their workshops, classes or to pay the production costs of their events. In practice all activity at the centre was dependent on private sponsors. In other words, the Culture Centres were set up as iconic representations of the State in all districts of Sri Lanka – but there were no monetary funds available for the artists who were supposed to contribute to the centre programs. To present honours to the artists involved was also a strategy of the board at the Matara Culture Centre, The honour system is, in my view, a way to create loyalties between the artists who receive awards and the centre. In the "cultural economy" the honour system becomes an asset. Most importantly, the program suggests a quest for the continuation of the "organic natural growth perspective" on culture in Sri Lanka where the state just facilitates and does not interfere in the activities of the local artists. Despite the lack of funding, during my fieldwork, the centre hosted a full night's performance of a Rata Yakuma rite for a large audience. They had put on a Suniyama rite

before, and a performance of a Mahasona Samayama rite was to come. They had pulled off a great program in relation with the Vesak celebration. There were visiting lecturers from Colombo that held workshops for local students. The dance lecturers whom I met continued their classes despite the delay in payments from the centre. The exhibit hall of the centre was continuously in use. In 2009 I found out that my informant, S.L.H Tillekeratna, was acting as a professional dance teacher at the centre. A highly honoured retired member of the National Dance Troupe and former lecturer at the Institute of Aesthetic studies at Alfred Crescent, and a close relative to some of my informants, Mr S.L.H Fernando was a member of the first board of the centre. In other words, the Aduras of the Matara district have contributed to the development of the program of the centre, they perform at shows and give classes for students in "Tovil dance".

6.5.4 A Note on Honour

The way I came to understand how honour was such a valuable asset in Sri Lanka was through my encounters with the highly developed system of demeanour and courteous conduct which is played out in everyday life. My best example is taken from a ritual house. The male patient was old, sick, of high caste and enjoyed a high social position in his village. However, he was now poor in monetary terms. The man had nonetheless held a very expensive all-night rite in order to follow the instructions written in his birth horoscope. In the morning when the rite was over, he gathered the Aduras in his living room together with a selected crowd of highly esteemed villagers and relatives. For the following hour and a half, he gave an unforgettable speech in which he reminded us about his noble actions, his many honourable affiliations and his economically hard times, before he handed over only half of the fee agreed to the head Adura. This staged situation made it impossible for the Adura to argue about the payment – he just had to accept it. I then got an insight into how money is just one of many economic assets at play in Sri Lanka – that one can settle accounts with one's caste status, relations, honourable deeds and status, generosity, good deeds and actions. It shows the importance of high status, generosity and good moral action among the Buddhist Sinhalese. It also shows how the "patron" – "client" status dynamics of the feudal land tenure system (G. Obeyesekere, 1967), where the Adura as a caste group takes a subordinate position – are still operative in the social and public sphere. This also explains

why there are so many public titles of honour given to local artists, and why the artists find such rewards honourable.

6.6 Multiculturalism and Cultural Diversity

In Differing Diversities (2001) Tony Bennett says that cultural diversity is the third phase in the development of cultural policy programs for the inclusion and safeguarding of the rich pool of cultural and artistic regimes of humanity. In this model, the first phase addresses the "support of the ethnic minority", the second addresses "multiculturalism" and the third includes "the approaches for cultural diversity". In the first phase, in the shadow of the world wars and the area of colonisation, ethnic groups formed with the goal of cultural separation from their neighbours. Many minorities, such as the Tamils of Sri Lanka, have not yet succeeded in their quest for a separate autonomous territory within the borders of a nation state. Multiculturalism came as a reaction to this minority/majority dialectics, influencing policies which at least in theory should treat each "cultural/religious system" operating within a nation equally. Cultural diversity, the third phase, "is the intersections and inter-mixings of, and crossovers between, different cultural perspectives and traditions that produce the social dynamics for forms of cultural diversity that constantly interpenetrate one another with new and unpredictable consequences", says Bennett (2001: 59). I argue that the cultural policy programs of 2003, when my last fieldwork ended, were still in phase two of the process and that the conception of cultural diversity pursued by Bennett was not that of Lankan cultural officers and cultural policy makers. Bennett's view on "Cultural Diversity", I emphasise, does not fully correlate with the UNESCO convention on cultural diversity as it pursues a somewhat idealistic perspective on culture/art as "de-territorialized" regimes, while the UNESCO convention (of 2005) acknowledges the territories of jurisdiction of national cultural policy programs. Still, it has some interesting perspectives on offer as Bennett emphasises the generative aspect of cultural dialectical processes as the goal of policies, and the fruitfulness of artistic and cultural intervention.

In the work "The Location of Culture", Homi Bhabha, the central post-colonial subaltern theorist based in England writes: "Cultural diversity is an epistemological object – culture as an object of empirical knowledge whereas cultural difference is the process of the enunciation of culture as knowledgeable, authoritative, adequate to the construction of

systems of cultural identification" (Ibid., 1994: 50). He continues: "If cultural diversity is a category of comparative ethics, aesthetics or ethnology, cultural difference is a process of signification through which statements of culture or on culture differentiate, discriminate and authorize the production of fields of force, reference, applicability and capacity. Cultural diversity is the recognition of pre-given cultural contents and customs; held in a time-frame of relativism it gives rise to liberal notions of multiculturalism, cultural exchange or the culture of humanity" (Bhabha, 1994: 50). In other words, Bennett's definition addresses the "social" level of cultural production and draws a distinction between the ethnic separation strategies – ethnic equality where traditional ethnic cultural practices are treated equally – and that of cultural diversity where exchanges and "mixing" between traditions happen. His work on "cultural diversity" developed in relation to the "muted" status of the many immigrant artists in UK and their strategies towards public recognition throughout the 1980s. And his definition of "cultural diversity" addresses the field of "cultural heritage", the "traditions", "pre-given of a cultural sphere" while he uses the word "cultural difference" when addressing the dialectical, dynamic aspect of cultural production, and the "fruitfulness of intervention" of Bennett. In other words, "cultural diversity" is defined as both the preservation and continuation of traditional aesthetic regimes, as well as the fruitful intervention between them. But in our case we stick to Bennett as his "Multicultural" definition in many ways addresses the dynamics of Bhabha's "cultural diversity". His concept of "cultural diversity" is comparable to the dynamics recognised by Bhabha as "cultural difference". Both Bennett and Bhabha make use of a semiotic model for culture, whose forms of expression, points of reference and signification are complex, vital, transgressive and transformative. Their models however are most concerned with the social and cultural dynamics, not so much the economical dimension of the field. However, this dimension was taken into account by the National Arts Council in 1999 which publicly expressed their concerns in their report that year.

In 1999 the Arts Council made the following policy statement for the benefit of "Cultural Diversity". The statement illustrates the link between the policy objective and international trade agreements and the cultural industries. In the 1999 annual report of the Arts Council named "Cultural Standardisation V.S. Cultural Diversity" it is stated that, in view of the trade agreements directly affecting the arts and cultural expression, persons engaged in cultural

activities have formed an "International Network for Cultural Diversity". The aims of the policy report are based on the presumption that: "Expression through art and culture is a fundamental part of human society. Human Society is diverse. Cultural diversity strengthens us all. Market forces cannot ensure the creation and sustainability of cultural diversity. Trade rules developed for goods and services are not appropriate for arts and culture. The adaptation of policies and programs which support diverse artistic and cultural activities is fundamental to the existence of individuals and organisations involved in all aspects of creative cultural expression, including creation, production, presentation, dissemination and conservation. These attempts illustrate that the idea that globalization is an inevitable occurrence and we have to be engulfed in it is a misconception. Thus, rather than sitting and waiting for presumption of the inevitability of globalization we must look with an open mind to protect our "Cultural Diversity" (Ibid., 1999: 8). The threat of "cultural standardisation" addresses the strong competition situation met in the global "cultural industries" market by local traditions and draws attention to the responsibility of local governments to safeguard local traditions from global market forces, and to provide support for the production of local arts.

Cultural and artistic expression in the Sri Lankan context was, as I found in 2003, still regarded as "primordial", as something evolving through millennia. It is eternal, primordial and has ontological/religious aspects attached. To pursue the Habermasian view of cultural policy, i.e. the colonisation of lifeworlds by instrumental reason (McGigan, 2004), was most often met with wonder by my informants, as if culture were ready made, to be reproduced and conserved for future generations, not an expression of the creative nature of mankind as Bennett's definition of "cultural diversity" suggests. I reason that there must be a sort of eternal conception of culture at play working on an overarching level, making insignificant the many noteworthy processes of change, transformations, development, creativity etc, which both the artists and cultural officers were aware of and emphasised in their work. I suppose that the emphasis on the doctrinal nature of traditional art forms as parts of religious systems, and that the efficacy of art forms (as dance in the "Tovil system") are conceived to depend on "correctness", and being able to "repeat" has been important in forming the local conception of how their "unique culture" contributes to the wider policy goal of "cultural diversity".

The perspective pursued by the creators of the statement of the Arts Council works towards the goals of "the standardisation of tradition – the ethnic group identity phase of Bennett's model. Moreover, in the mission statement of the Ministry of Cultural and Religious Affairs in 2001; cultural diversity was mentioned as an overarching aim for their policies. The aim for cultural diversity as a cultural policy objective is, according to Tony Bennett's model, quite different from that of multiculturalism.

In my view, independent artists and art-education bodies had in 2001 already moved towards the third phase of Bennett's model. The "Multi Ethnic" cultural policy objectives of the UNP mirror the policies of "development aid donors" and others that follow on from policy trends from UNESCO. Some of my Adura informants had the chance to participate in a program of one of the international donors celebrating "cultural diversity", but as things turned out they found it difficult to imagine how they could put together a different piece in "fusion" with artists from other traditions than the one that they represented. Some thought it impossible. However, traditional artists employed by the state have taken on such assignments. A mixed drum troupe under the leadership of Ravibanda (the leader of the national dance troupe in 2003), has for instance made a successful performance in Colombo at the Indian Culture Centre, and also toured with the show internationally. In 2003, the government had a plan for about hundred new culture centres, and a national culture centre is today in the making in Colombo funded by China (and Japan?), and this will promote culture and the arts. I observed many crossover productions that make clever use of local and "foreign" art forms. "Creative" classes are given in the "traditional arts" at the Institute of Aesthetic Studies. At national dance competitions "new innovations" are lauded. The challenges related to the culture industry and cultural markets in Sri Lanka (such as tourism) require urgent solutions, as the manifest of the Arts Council suggests.

Private initiatives were also started in regard to meeting the public vision of a "multi cultural nation". In Colombo, in late October 2003, the Hero news-group had organised a multi ethnical cultural festival at the New Town Hall on Flower-road in the centre of Colombo – in the area where the Colombo Museum, John de Silva Memorial Theatre and the National Arts Gallery and other key institutions for the promotion of Buddhist Sinhalese cultural traditions are located. Artist unions, various trade unions, and private co-operations

sponsored the event. In other words it was a non-governmental idealistic initiative. There were about 200 delegates that had come by bus from Jaffna, and altogether about 500 participants gathered there. The festival program was set up over two days, and was directed towards people working in the field of literature, drama, film, journalism and music. The member of the organiser, the Hero new group, whom I spoke with said that the motivation behind the festival was that by engaging common emotions and experience through art one is able to build bridges between linguistic and cultural differences. The Hero group moreover thought that this festival was one of historical importance. On the first day of the festival, members of the extreme left, JVP, who are against a federal solution of the ethnic conflict, and members from the Sinhala Urumaya, an organisation of extreme Buddhist nationalist hardliners, protested against what they viewed as an open "LTTE propaganda meeting", and violently attacked the Tamils present. It was a historic meeting because when attacked, the Sinhalese artists protected their Tamil colleagues from Jaffna against the "Buddhist hardliner mob". Such a friendly protective gesture had not been given a group of Tamils in public in Colombo since the outbreak of the civil war in 1983. Ten people were hospitalised afterwards as a result of the violence. The Hero independent media group responded to the accusations of LTTE loyalty by referring to the fact that the group are banned by the LTTE, and had been so since their start-up 10 years previously. The festival continued on the second day, now with a whole squadron of policemen in the streets for protection provided by the government. The discussions and artistic program went on as planned, needless to say, with the inclusion of emotional statements on the events of the previous day. At the end of the day, for the first time since the outbreak of war a short play, written and performed by actors from the northern region, was performed in Colombo. My informant from the Hero group concluded that this event had made signals to others that "peace" was in reach, that racist and fascistic ideas could be dispelled. Through the last two days, new lasting friendships had been made.

Some weeks later a play by visiting artists from Jaffna was supposed to be put on in Colombo, at Lionel Wendt's. But due to the political state of emergency in 2003, the artists did not dare leave Jaffna as they were afraid that the Lankan Army would hinder their return. The feeling of safety and mutual trust caused by the ceasefire agreement of 2002 was then in rapid decline.

A speaker at John DeSilva in October 2003 shared concerns with the audience and stated that: "It is important that our culture and our art forms are brought forward to an international level. In this regard, English is important and we will therefore make the announcements in English, performed by a special announcer for today. This is the first time we have made an announcement in English, and another reason is so that foreigners will also be able to understand what is going on." And during the same period, Tamil translations were given at some of the public events that I visited. Such a treat towards the Tamil speaking population or the foreign me, was never given in this circle during my research in 2001 – 2002. At the Rama Krishna Hall in Colombo, at the annual festival of Karnatic music and Bharatha Natyam, the speeches were translated equally. The Hon. Minister of Education and Culture Kodithuwakku made only a brief visit, as the "state of emergency" recently declared by the President demanded his presence at the office. Still, he put forward his wishes for a multicultural nation and stated his views on the importance of culture in its realisation. The invitation for the festival mirrored the public vision for a multicultural nation as it was stated:

> "In a multiracial, multicultural and multi religious society such as ours, beset with hatred, mistrust, conflict, contradiction, trials and tribulation and discord, it is very important that we should imbibe and promote our cultural and religious values for a human and humane way of life for our country which will help a great deal in resolving our political and social problems. It was our great cultural scholar, the late Martin Wickremesinghe (a politician and novelist) who said; the success of political independence depends on the evolution of cultural independence which alone can unite the whole multi-racial and multi-religious population of Sri Lanka to work together for unity, peace and communal harmony. Music and dance are the two major art forms which have withstood the ravages of colonialism and foreign rule and emerged unscathed. Even in the most turbulent and unsettled periods when political writings, treachery, greed and ambition were the order of the day, music and dance flourished. In fact, art is an attempt to bring down within the vision of ordinary mortals, some of the divine beauty. Art is the international language in which mind can speak to mind, heart to heart, and where limbs are dumb. Art will permeate, pervade

> and penetrate the whole atmosphere of the new civilization, which is on the threshold. Dance is an exterior expression of the interior sensation of the soul conveyed through movements and steps in time to music. The human body in a subtle and scintillating sequence, in fact a person's entire cycle can eloquently and beautifully express the feelings, emotions. The eyes, face, fingers, the hands and feet are exquisitely blended in prising out the best in a person. Music is a universal language without any barriers of race, caste or creed."

In this period of Lankan political history, then, "Multiculturalism" was a declared a policy objective of the national cultural policy.

6.7 Summing Up

The many cultural heritage sites, temples and religious monuments took a great share of the funds available for cultural affairs. With the materialisation of the "culture centres in each village vision", out of which about fifty new centres formed during my research period, one can say that facilitation of religion, the arts and culture – or as Cummings and Katz (1987) would call this tendency, 'state monumentalism', was given preference in local cultural policy programs. In the field of cultural policy, this strategy is regarded as symbolic as it is the development of artistic skills and artistic fields which is the real challenge in the development of arts, both in regard to time, and human and monetary resources. My findings suggest that public aims for the "cultivation of the self" serving religious goals, and the continuation of the great "traditions" were prioritised in the cultural policy programs – just as they were in the Indian state policies documented by Vatsayan (1972) as mentioned in the introduction. The Sri Lankan example also shows how the model of cultural policy referred to above which Tony Bennett describes as: "as a historically specific set of institutionally embedded relations of government in which forms of thought and conduct of extended populations are targeted for transformation – partly via the extension through the social body of forms, techniques, and regimens of aesthetic and intellectual culture in relation to discourses of moral regulation" (Ibid., 1992: 26), lacks a back up plan for a governmental regime that has to negotiate between competing religious and moral systems in its objectives.

6.7.1 To be Continued

In 2004, Hon. Vijitha Herath was minister of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs & National Heritage. The mission of the ministry was the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes for preservation, promotion and propagation of Culture and National Heritage. In June 2008, I found that there were two Ministries that dealt with the programs of the Ministry of Cultural and Buddhist Affairs in 2001. One was the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Moral Upliftment led by Minister Kodhituvakku, the former Minister of Human Resource Development, Education and Cultural Affairs in 2001. The other was the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and national Heritage led by Minister Mahinda Yapa Abeywardana. In other words the transformations that were put into play during my research in 2003 reshaped the whole structure of the "cultural affairs". I read that the Arts Council now has 5 panels: for national literature, dance-ballet-puppetry, drama, music, arts/sculpture, and the former negotiation between arts and identity politics has thus been put on hold. The ethnic labelling has been removed. A separate foreign cultural relations unit has been formed. Divisional cultural centres in most Sri Lankan Army controlled areas have been established, and as listed in June 2008 the number had reached 144.

The mission statement of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and National Heritage in June 2008 was stated to be: *Preservation of cultural activities, formulation of a national policy for promotion and propagation of cultural activities to suit the social and economic development programs and the implementation thereof. Introduction of the policy to the people as a whole for the propagation, formulation of a cultural policy applicable to non-government agencies, protection of distinguished cultural values and utilization of new creations and activities based on traditions.*

7 ON MODERN TRANSFORMATIONS

7.1 Exploring the Social and Creative dimension of the "Tovil system"

The final questions to be addressed in the thesis are: What is the contemporary version of the ancient trinity of the "Tovil system" between the central power, arts and religion? What is it about the "Tovil dance" as an art form, the Aduras as dancers, and the Sri Lankan socio/political religious context, which enables the Aduras to achieve such success in the multiple arenas in which they participate in performance? ? What are the ontological, creative, innovative and adaptive aspects of this system that has continued throughout such a long period of history? In order to shed light on these questions it is necessary to consider the modern transformations of the "Tovil system", and some of its social and cultural aspects. The wider processes of change that the system is subject to come with multiple features, and this chapter will consider the "systemic" involvement with the "modern capitalist spectacle", trans-national traditionalism, changes in education institutions, the multiple ranking of caste, class and titles of honour, as well as a note on the changes in the economic situation of the ritualists themselves. The study revealed the following central changes in the system: the Tovil rituals, compared with the situation 25 years ago, are a rare event and the members of the active network of Aduras are relatively few. The Aduras are no longer the only dancers/drummers around, but in order to be a ritual performer of the "Tovil system" one has to be an initiated ritualist, and still the "Gurunanses" give preference to talented students from their kin group. In relation to traditional dance, the Aduras are viewed as the "authentic" performers, but still there are "professional traditional dancers" and in regard to the achievements of public honours of excellence through the many competitions, birth does not matter. The case of the "hybrid dancer" brings evidence that assimilation between the two professional degrees in "Tovil dance" (in the "Tovil system" and at the University) is possible and perhaps will be an increasing tendency for the future.

With the movements of the "capitalist spectacle" the social worlds that invented and brought meaning to the cultural forms of the "Tovil system" are dissolving. The complexity of the system is in a downwards spiral. The upgrading of the Tovils into a Buddhist rite of

"blessing" – with the goal of "pleasing the mind" – degrades its original multiplex patterns of signification – the density of ideography, cosmology, aesthetic compositions and pragmatic ends. Tradition has many features; conservation, standardisation and repetition are some of them. I will argue that the concept of tradition and "doctrine" are very similar, and that the Tovils, due to their ontological position, have not actually been transformed by their new position, but continue their existence in their mediating realm between the social worlds of the Lankan Buddhist subjects and the spiritual beings of the local pantheon. The decline in Tovil rites and the rise in the popularity of the "pidenis" creates a turn away from the aesthetic richness of the "Tovil system" as the pidenis work on the basic transaction between the patient and the agents of misfortune as well as ritual acts of bodily purification from "pillu" (substance of the Yaka and Pretea – and sorcery) and are performed without any dramatic sequences. The public bodies of education have shown concern about the ritual arts and medical aspects of the "Tovil system", the part of the system that deals with "magic", and mantras/ritual offerings are not yet made at any public institution. The social statuses achieved by the Aduras that are "traditional artists" are not attainable for those who have specialised in the offering ritual procedures of the system only – the "mantra men".

7.2 Professional Continuation at Risk

Looking into old ethnographic records on the "Tovil system", the decline of the Tovil rituals has been envisaged since the beginning of the 19th century. Ethnographers like Perthold and Seligmans expressed concern that they were the last to study the system[31] in its "original" form. British colony-masters tried to eradicate the system because, in an attempt to make the Sinhalese more "disciplined", they banned the sound of the ritual drum after sunset (M. Roberts, 1994). The Tovil rites went on all night and sleepy or absent workers potentially slowed down the colonial economy. The ban may have been efficient because the drum

[31] The "Tovil system" makes reference to the southern traditions which include both the Yak Tovils: Mahasona Samayama, Sanni Yakuma, Rata Yakuma and Maha Kalu Kumare Samayama as well as the Shanti Karmaya rites: Suniyama, Deva Tovil, Gammaduva, Gara Yakuma and the Bali Yage – as well as the less elaborate pidenis. The gods offered to in a Shanti Karmaya rite are superior to the demons and spirits in the Yak Tovils. The new role of Yak Tovil (when performed for show) as a Shanti Karmaya rite, is quite controversial because of the subordinate position the supernaturals offered to take in the Buddhist Pantheon.

plays an essential role in the Tovil rites as the sound of drums "breathes life" (djivan kirima) into the offering, the charm and the spell. A Tovil rite in its elaborate aesthetic form requires a drum orchestra to accompany the dancers. The law was however not seriously enforced and the Aduras continued business as usual.

Many seniors that I met in relation with my Tovil research (off and on throughout the years of 1996–2003) nostalgically referred to the glorious past of the Tovils. Reed (2002), who has carried out research among the "Up –country" Bereva ritualists (in the Kandy region of the central highlands), writes that during the 1970s and 1980s, the number of ritualists was dramatically reduced. Simpson (Ibid.), who worked in the south, observed the same process in the south in the years of 1980–1995. Simpson does not just note changes in the frequency of rites and declining numbers of ritual specialists, he also states that the rites that previously were performed for the neighbourhood and family, today are either acted out in secret for the closest family or made into a grand public event. A Tovil rite, such as the Rata Yakuma described in chapter 4–5, is thus a rare event today but was not so about 25 year ago. My own data reveals a tendency that the frequency of the grand Tovil rites performed in the presence of the extended family of the patient varies in accordance with the local economy. In 2001 the Sri Lankan political and economical situation was very uncertain and Tovils were very rare. The Rata Yakuma rite that I documented was a genuinely special event compared with the frequency of village rites, or the Suniyama, Mahasona Samayama and Sanni Yakuma ritual. When visiting in February – March 2006, the post tsunami reconstruction projects generated a good income for many and in one week I was able to see three Rata Yakuma rites in Matara, and there were other rites scheduled as well. I can explain this sudden popularity of the rite with the economic spin offs of the "post tsunami economy". Still, I share the view of Simpson and Reed that the frequency of the Tovil rites in my period of research in Sri Lanka in 1997–2003 was low, that the Tovil rites are rare and that the present professional network of Aduras that know every tiny part of the system have a demanding job to do in order to help take the profession into the future. During my own fieldwork I worked with initiated dancers who travelled extensively across the south – southwest/southeast part of the island. The Maha Chari, who led the rites called them in from afar as they did not have initiated dancers fit for the job in their own village. Revered

ritual dancers were in other words few in the network of professional Aduras during my fieldwork periods (1996–2003).

The highest risk identified by the Aduras themselves in regard to the continuation of their ritual traditions concerns the effort and dedication it takes to become a fully initiated Adura – the question of ritual skills. The work is hard and demanding, the younger generation are not prepared for the effort required in order to become and work as a ritual specialist. Through my many nights of observations of "Tovil dance" I learned the art form quite well. And when comparing a performance of initiated dancers with "dancers" trained outside of the structures of the "Tovil system" the initiated Aduras came out as far more elegant in relation to speed, bodily flexibility, and precision, and showed a greater repertoire of "movement texts". The Aduras often work 4 days/nights a week (18-24 hours rites are most common), sometimes more, sometimes less, but the frequency is in fact necessary in order to keep fit for the job. So to develop ritual skills the ritualist is dependent on access to ritual venues, and the ritual venues evolve in relation with the public requests for the sorts of ritual service that the Aduras employ.

Structural transformations took place during the colonial era, and the gradual presence of "grand modernity" with its institutions and systems produced great changes in the Sri Lankan society. The transformations in the local cosmology and religion, changes in the education sector and professional careers, the movement from feudal castes to social classes, the turn from local subsistence economy to global capitalism are all social/cultural/religious changes with impacts on the "Tovil system". The cases illuminating the arguments of the previous chapters carry proof that the Tovils are not yet dead and gone but play a vital part in Sri Lankan social/religious/culture. Consequently *in the following I set out to investigate the adaptive and assimilating qualities of the "Tovil system".*

The analysis is based on a presumption that the continuation of an aesthetical practice such as the Tovils, depends on the development of a complex set of human skills. The Tovils are an aesthetic practice and as such the dialectics between continuation and aesthetic innovation and variation in the expression of form and media are important to ensure that performances generate aesthetic excess, and engage aesthetic experience in the spectators.

An example of these dynamics can be taken from a musician rehearsing a new piece that one day will "move" an audience. The instrument has to be tuned, the pianist's fingers must be strong and he must be able to read music. Moreover, the pianist needs the cognitive capacity of sensing the right speed, strength of touch and volume that makes the piece sound – he must be born with musical talent. The investigation of the creative development of composers such as the Beatles and Mozart has shown that it takes (about 10) years of continuous rehearsals and performances to develop skills and a repertoire that enables novel innovations on complex classical aesthetic forms (R. Sternberg, 1998). That the artists attain proper skills for the performance of a varied repertoire, through continuous repetition/ training, is in other words essential for the development of creative performances. Skills are therefore crucial for the continuation of Tovil work, *and the question of how present institutions for learning meet the needs of development of proper skills,* was the aim of my fieldwork trips in 2001–2003.

A musical piece is composed of tones which are put together to form a set with a certain speed and distance, and duration, and the chosen instruments offer a variety of expressions of sound. Dancers imitate these movements in space and in time. Music, as an aesthetic form, works with the senses. As the rasa theory of Indian classical dance shows, there are 8 primary emotions to be evoked in the spectator through the performance of certain movements and expressions. As commonly known, a high C brings out tears – a horror film without a soundtrack is rarely scary. As an aesthetic composition a music piece in "its own being" does not make a semiotic reference but in performance a composition becomes a monument of the moment. Many pieces have been commissioned for social/cultural/ religious/political events. The composition as a "soundtrack" to the event can be said to play up to the creation of the moment. The piece can be played over and over again, and thus re-actualise its origin, bringing the past into the present. As an aesthetical practice the "Tovil system" is in continual dialectic relation with the historical/socio/political context of the time that gives it meaning and defines its "ends". The aesthetic (sensible) technology employed in an aesthetic system like the Tovils is directed by the "imageries" (for instance the nature, features and whereabouts of the Yakku and ghosts addressed in the Tovil rites) and the possibilities of the chosen media, aesthetic form and expressions to bring about iconic/indexical representations of the anticipated "cultural idioms" at play. The many pragmatic ends of a Tovil rite become its compositional structure of procedure and content.

This model of the dynamic interrelation between aesthetics, skills, institutions, and cultural idioms directs the analysis to follow on the contemporary situation of the "Tovil system"," its risks and possibilities for further development.

The information discussed is based on interviews that I conducted with the help of my translator with the "traditional arts crowd". The "traditional arts crowd", which is my own invented concept of this network, includes officers at the Department of Culture, lecturers at Alfred Crescent, senior dance teachers, the leader and members of the Arts Council and the leader and members of the National Dance Troupe. Most of my observational data was collected on the trips that I made together with Aduras living in the Matara district. These people were: Somatilleka from Kekkenedura, Chandraratna from Weligama, Tillekeratna from Kapugama, Dharmasena from Galle and the three drummers from Akuressa; Siripala, Arniss and Martin, and they formed the "star troupe" that I followed most frequently. I also have observational data from modern stage dance productions, traditional dance shows, dance classes and dance competitions. In relation to the work on this chapter I was fortunate to meet the two grand seniors of public "up-country dance" performances: Chitrasena who brought "up-country dance" to the stage, and Pani Bharata who founded the National dance troupe of Sri Lanka and who developed courses and degrees in traditional dance.

The work of Debord; "The Society of the Spectacle" (1967) will be used illustratively to shed light on the contemporary social/cultural/religious "condition" of the "Tovil system".

7.2.1 The Gurunanse Tradition

In my major thesis (Larsen 1998) I dealt with some of the issues related with the teaching structure/Gurunanse tradition of the "Tovil system". I also addressed the different professional titles to be achieved through a career as a ritualist. In my last fieldwork I changed focus towards the leading teaching body of traditional dance forms such as "Tovil dance", the Institute of Aesthetic Studies at Alfred Crescent in Colombo. But with the aim of making sense of the transition from one education body to another, I will say a little on the Gurunanse/gurukulle tradition. All of the Aduras informing this work were familiar with the teacher, "Gurunanse" – student lineage, "gurukulle" that they were descended from. The longest line known to me counted 8 generations of Gurunanse/student relations. The many

genealogies of "gurukulles" show that the "Tovil system" for centuries has been a conventional and dogmatic system, and that the students learnt the "right thing" from the senior teachers in a modernistic disciplinary fashion. The Adura becomes a senior of the system when he alone undertakes the diagnosis process and defines the ritual cure to be prescribed for the patient and becomes the orga-niser of the ritual. Another activity defining senior status is that the Adura takes on students. Among my informants this transition took place when they reached the age of 35–40. The relationship between a teacher (Gurunanse) and his students (gåliya) tends to take on fatherly characteristics since they are usually close relations and the student will preferably live at the Gurunanse's house. The student adopts a subordinate position to his teacher in accordance with the common custom of honouring and obeying one's father and the elders of the family. In fact in some families, it is still common to bow down and honour the feet of one's father or elder members of the family when leaving or meeting them, in the same way as worshippers greet their gods at the temple. All students of dance that I have observed, perform this honourable gesture when they meet or depart from their teacher. The student's (gåliya's) relationship with his guru is close. But even though a student has been initiated and "belongs" to a particular Gurunanse, many of the Aduras honoured more than one senior as their teachers when asked. This illustrates the collective nature of the Tovil as a knowledge system; individual members know bits and pieces of the system. Some are more talented, achieve higher skills and become more knowledgeable than others, and these Aduras are honourably entitled Maha Charis or Mantra Charis, and often lead the group at rituals. At the Gurunanse's house the student gets individual training in drumming and dance and spends hours memorising ritual texts. When a student has learned the dance items of one Tovil rite, which in the low-country tradition most commonly means the Rata Yakuma rite, the student is allowed to participate in an assignment and shortly after there is a ceremony which marks the transformation of the student into a initiated dancer (See Larsen 1998, Nurnberger 1998). Moreover, at the Gurunanses they learn the practical skills of mask carving, sewing and embroidery of ritual costumes. They copy manuscripts and yantra diagrams, learn about ritual procedures and the pragmatic effects of ritual acts. Most importantly perhaps, they learn about the different diseases that the rites are able to cure because they are present and assist their teachers during the crucial process of diagnosis. Therefore, to study Tovils for a ritualist does not make sense without the practical training they go through at their

Gurunanse's home. Moreover, to mimic the work of the other Aduras at the ritual venues is their basic way of gaining knowledge. The film, "The Songs of Ceylon" by Basil Wright on local up-country cultural practices from the 1930s shows a scene where a Gurunanse has a dance class for his students. In his class there were about 10–15 boys. By comparison my senior informants usually have one or two students at a time.

The Gurunanse tradition is structured along the lines of the "birth right and birth duty" principle of the caste system. The role of the Aduras in the rayakariya – service for the king – where caste relationship was given by birth and the status of the caste was related with the "purity" of one's ritual service, bears a resemblance to the Indian jati system as described by Andre Beteille (1996) in his classical article "Varna and Jati". The social game of complex systems of restricted contact between people from different castes (the varna system) has not been adopted in Sri Lanka to the same degree as in India. (Dumont, 1970, Raby, 1985, Yalman, 1960 and Roberts, 1984). Briefly, jati is understood as a duty. It is a duty for a person to carry out the service and profession of the caste that he is born into. The service castes were in the past thus obliged to carry out ritual work for their kings (or village headmen), for the village community and at the village temples. Today some, but not all Adura communities carry on the duties of their forefathers.

The Aduras have, due to the "state intervention" in the field of "Tovil dance", lost their "caste monopoly" as performers and teachers of dance and drumming. There is a movement away from Tovil ritual art as a professional duty that the Bereva caste members were born to carry out. A situation where an aspiring Bereva ritualist had to be accepted by initiated senior Gurunanses with the purpose of learning "Tovil dance" has changed into a setting where the art form can be learned through many public and private institutions. Ritual service as carried out by the practitioners of the "Tovil system", was traditionally paid for with crops, goods and services, and sometimes also land, but today the ritualists prefer to receive money. With the open access to A-level exams and the availability of paid jobs – particularly after the opening of the economy in 1977, the caste system has gradually lost its importance. The low caste status given the "Aduras" due to the "impure" nature of the spirits that they deal with, and the fact that it is physically very hard to carry out ritual work, has additionally made the traditional ritual service families advise their sons to take other careers. The two cases to

follow on the "hybrid dancer" and the "Maharagama School case" are presented in order to shed light on how these changes are played out.



Students admiring the offering-stands that they helped prepare for the Mahasona Samayama show

The key difference between an initiated Adura and a traditional dancer is that one must be initiated in the "Tovil system" in order to be allowed to carry out ritual work. Moreover, a traditional dancer is trained in many different dance traditions, while the Adura learns only one with the Gurunanse. The Gurunanse teaches his student: dance, songs, mask postures/dance, mantra, mask carving, acrobatics, drumming, Ayurvedic medicine, ritual decorations (gokkole), comedy dialogue, cosmology/the pantheon, diagnosis and curing procedures as well as all of the "guru mustis" teacher secrets. By comparison, the "traditional dance" student learns: dance, drumming, acrobatics and songs. It is also possible to take classes in dance/drama. This means that the Adura can participate in all sorts of venues, most particular the rites serving "prosperity for the community" or "subjective curing" ends, while the "traditional dancer's" appearance is restricted to public ceremonial performances, shows and stage dances as described in the previous chapters.

7.2.2 The Hybrid Dancer and the Curing Rite Project of the Graduates at the Maharagama School

In my fieldwork in 2001–2003, I met three initiated dancers in their early twenties that performed with my key informants who had all been affiliated with local dance schools and attained public acknowledgement through prizes won at national and regional dance competitions. One of these Aduras also held a degree in low-country dance from Alfred

Crescent. This particular dancer thus represented a new "hybrid" of a ritualist that I had not encountered before[32]. In addition to his work as a dancer, he followed advanced classes in the "dead" language Pali, the language of Buddhist scriptures, at a Buddhist monastery. Moreover, he was from the farmer caste (Goigama), thus not born into the traditional Adura clan of ritualists who consider Tovil work as something they have the duty and right to practise by birth. However, the dancer was married to the daughter of a drummer from a Adura family. This affiliation gave him special status with his "Gurunanse" who was the uncle of his wife, and between classes and assignments he received private lessons in ritual dance, studied texts and learnt about ritual procedures at his house. His Gurunanse is one of the most knowledgeable Aduras around, and the affiliation that his student had gained through marriage was emphasised as important for the position held in relation with his Gurunanse.

An interesting change in the research on rituals situation in 2001, compared with my former fieldwork in 1996-1997, was the fact that at ritual events I was often accompanied by other students researching Tovils. The researchers were local scholars teaching at the various universities or other students doing degrees in Aesthetics. For instance, at one rite I met two students from the Institute of Aesthetics of the University of Keleniya. One of them was doing a degree in music and was interested in the role of music in the rituals, – the other was taking a practical degree in "classical dance" of the low-country tradition – the dance of the yak Tovils and was thus interested in the style and expression of the dancers.

Visiting a school in Maharagama for a public performance of a Mahasona Samayama rite with no less than three "fake" patients (in the original rites there is just one, who is authentic), I found myself in a new research situation. I had attended many forms of "traditional arts" events before, but never one that had been organised as an "education project". I had however heard about such events taking place in the past at the culture centres at different universities. At the site, about fifty young students were busy asking questions about the names of the offering structures, the offerings and the "program" (pella

32 The invention of the "Deva Tovil" as a curing rite by an Adura who had "arode powers" – a devoted priest embodying the power of the gods - is discussed in my major thesis, Larsen, 1998.

paliya) for the rite that night. The "Mahasona Samayama Show" was put together as their common graduate project, and was supervised by their teacher in dance and music. The teacher was a man from Matara, from a Bereva (drummer caste) family who knew the ritual traditions well. Some male students contributed to the creation of the "Vidiya" – offering structure – for the "show". A mixed group helped prepare the "offering menu". The promoters were expecting several thousand people to attend: art celebrities, the Minister of Culture and Buddhist Affairs, public officers, board members of the Arts Council, and so it was. A crew from the national television channel Rupavami filmed the event. The producer told me that he himself did his thesis for his master's degree in media and communication on the Mahasona Samayama. He had in his younger years been a student of a "Gurunanse" of the low-country tradition, but had not danced in many ritual events. He had come to Maharagama to do a documentary on this rite, in which he had a special interest.

A Mahasona Samayama is traditionally performed as a curing rite, but in this case it was just for entertainment (sandarsena). This was a show in the spirit of the capitalist spectacle as illustrated by Debord (1967) because: "The spectacle manifests itself is an enormous positivity, out of reach and beyond dispute. All it says is: Everything that appears is good: whatever is good will appear" Debord 1967: #12. The entertaining "ends" of the Mahasona Samayama on this night were introduced as shanti karmaya; the ritual performers who set out to bring about a taste of peace and the blessing of all (supernaturals as humans) through the ritual performance. A Shanti karmaya rite carries the potential of creating a balanced mind, which is a fortunate state when aspiring for Buddhist goals. It thus denotes the religious ontological position of the event. When Debord claims that: "The spectacle is (hence) a technological version of the exiling of human powers in a "world beyond" – and a perfection of separation within human beings" (Debord 1967: #20), the difference in the features of the public spectacle of Debord and the Tovils becomes clear. Even though performed for show, a Mahasona Samayama performed in this context is not creating a "material reconstruction" (Ibid.) of religious illusions, but continues its existence in the realm of the real (laukika) of a Buddhist subject and addresses every being of the real (laukika). Additionally the "Buddhist heritage" label of the performance and the dominating Sinhalese Buddhist audience attracted to the event" worked against the goal of communal union and not towards the ends of the capitalist spectacle; "separation within human

beings". In other words, a "standard" ritual like the Mahasona Samayama is performed as a "rite of blessing for all" not just as a curing rite helping patients ridden with "dosa" (supernatural illness) which was its original aim. It is my view that the movement of the Tovils into the realm of "Buddhist heritage" and the creation of "traditional religious arts" venues has had the effect of creating complementary orientation of the ritual ends of the same ritual procedures. The divine origin of ritual arts as dance, the way anyone trained in traditional dance asks the gods for permission to dance before they start, safeguards the ontological connection of any dance performance, and also the performances which are taking place outside of the traditional ritual contexts. Pani Bharata elaborated on this link in the following way: "Some artists have taken bits and pieces from traditional art forms to create new modern pieces, but the dance itself has kept its ritualistic value. Dance used to be a language of ritual. For example, the pahan madue (flower shed) that you create on a dance arena is meant for the gods. Through the kavi you invite the gods to come to the arena where you are about to dance, and you ask permission from them to do the dance. Then you have to worship the earth and the sky. In the prayer one also calls upon Mihikante, the earth goddess, followed by the summoning of the four elements; apu/fire, tejo/water, wayo/air, pattewi/earth. Without this invocation a dance is not complete (and you cannot dance). We believe that the gods are paying attention when you dance." In my major thesis (Larsen 1998) I mentioned that a "ritual act" performed for show was done incompletely. As a complete ritual was on for "show" tonight, the Aduras set out to do everything correctly and to finish up the ritual procedures that they had started (and had promised the supernaturals) in order to avoid the wrath of gods, deities and demons engaged with through the ritual performance.

The following night there was a Suniyama rite in the outskirts of Colombo – as company for the night I had two interested and interesting Fine Arts students seated next to me that had also been at the Maharagama Show. This change in the research situation told me that Tovil knowledge today is learned and taught, documented and analysed by a wide community of scholars – not just academics like myself. *To process ritual ends however, one has to know the whole system by heart and must be an initiated ritualist.* Due to the promotion value, the Aduras welcome those who want to document their work. The "education" of people in the Tovils is, in other words, a concern of the community of Aduras that I worked with. They have a professional

take on the performance of Tovils for entertainment. The case of the "hybrid dancer" also points to a fresh assimilating stage that the inter-relationship between the "Gurunanse schools", and the public dance education has moved into. In the years of 2001–2003 some members of the "star troupe" gave regular dance lessons at Alfred Crescent. They were the first of the active Aduras in the Matara district who I got as informants, to be formally affiliated with the institute.

Two articles written on the "recent" developments in the field of ritual dance in Sri Lanka by Susan Reed (2002) and Bob Simpson (1998) are of particular interest as their findings on changes in knowledge transportation of "Tovil dance" and in the Bereva caste community are complementary to my own. The greatest difference between their studies and mine is that they studied the Berevas as a caste community, while I have from the start chosen informants that are active performers in the "Tovil system" – the professional network of priests/dancers and drummers. In the Sri Lankan context the "up-country" and "low-country" ritual practitioners are representatives of two different traditions. A third division, which I have little knowledge about, is the Saburugamuwa tradition. The traditions are perceived by the Aduras to have developed from the same source, the yage/homa sacrifice rituals of the Indian Irsis (seers) about 3000 years ago. The first yage/homa ritual was performed in Sri Lanka by visiting Indian Brahmins. In regard to ritual work, the traditions preserved by the Adura communities living in these regions have evolved in dialectics with distinct religious cults – social power centres. As Reed worked in Kandy and Simpson (I presume from his writings) worked in Galle, their works reveal some interesting differences between the contemporary situation for the up-country and low-country traditions. Moreover, the work on the development of stage dance, by Nurnberger (1998), brings complementary information of the development of the field of stage dance from the classical forms of the "up-country" tradition. I will elaborate on the differences between the traditions below. It is important to note that I always talk about two levels of "tradition". On the one hand there are the traditions created by the public bodies to serve the ends of national cultural politics, and on the other the "traditions" of ritual procedures promoted by diverse clans of ritualists living in different regions of Sri Lanka.

7.3 Modern Spectacle and the Tovils

Modernity, internationalisation, the building of the autocratically run democratic republic of Sri Lanka, the adoption of a capitalist economy, the culture industry etc. have had a great impact on the "Tovil system". This process of secularisation and commoditisation of traditional cultural (religious) practices, and the empowerment of social communities through spectacles seems to be a common process of the social and cultural adoption of a market economy and has been an object of discourse for many "Critical Theorists". Debord's (1967) thesis argued that global capitalism and modernity turn our symbolic worlds into commodities, and social spectacles are of interest for an analysis of the postcolonial developments in the "Tovil system". The system's involvement in the entertainment industry and "public education" has caused it to be transformed, which again has made it less actual, less complex, less detailed, less elaborate, less operative and more conventional and streamlined.

The contemporary form, twists and shapes of Tovil art forms in popular culture suit well the description of the capitalist spectacle observed in France by Debord. The spectacle of Debord is one of capitalist-driven institutions and consumerism (Best and Keller, 1997). The wide distribution of electronic audio and visual media that came with the industrial revolution – the media that Debord uses as his point of reference – "invades" the cognitive register, our private and social sphere, in new ways. The media spectacle has become the power regime that the spectacle of the Roman circus served in the pre-industrial world. The aesthetical technology of the Tovil rituals/" Tovil dance" and its media are qualitatively different from the spectacles of Debord. And as it serves to constitute power through the hierarchical positioning of people involved in the rites, it might as a form of media share more similarities with the Roman circus than the audio/visual media of Debord. As pointed out in the introduction, those trained in the arts of traditional dance share an embodied sociality – a shared kinaesthetic language. And I repeat, as Randy Martin (Lepecki 2004) suggests in his work on "modern dance" : "Dancing bodies reference a social kinaesthetic, a sentient apprehension of movement and a sense of possibility as to where motion can lead us, that amounts to a material amalgamation of thinking and doing as a world-making activity." (Ibid., 2004: 48). As an art form dance serves multiple ends: dance engages with emotions, dance is a creation of and in a moment – it is temporary – kinaesthetic in its sense

of space and time. Dance manifests physical energy – dance creates prints in the air. In rituals it is useful for pleading with gods, it is conceived as a form of sound – a language of communication between beings of every world. It breaks illusions and engages the forces of the cosmos. As bodily movement it serves as a demarcation of space or territory; dance can be a part of a spectacle – for pure entertainment; dance can be gestures manifesting superiority, or as a communal shared body language it can represent social identity. Dance enables transgression of social taboos and of the body and self, particularly through trance dance as gesture serves as a codified language. As an art form, dance has transgressive capacities and can be adopted in many contexts, serving many ends. "Tovil dance" as an art form is the creation of a distinct movement pattern open for many artistic innovations.

For Debord, capitalism itself is a spectacle that penetrates all spheres of being, the social, the cultural, the religious and the economic, and it does so with the promise of possible change. (Best and Keller, 1997). The material standards of the rising middle class in Sri Lanka model the life aspired to by the many poor. With money one is able to escape the destiny indicated by low caste membership at birth. No one is so poor in Sri Lanka that they do not get the image of the middle class life style brought into their home through the daily "tele-dramas" and films. The presence of audio/visual media in people's lives has dramatically changed the "lifeworld" of most humans, including the people of Sri Lanka. The lifeworld of the natural habitat in Sri Lanka, the social world that gave birth to the system, included the existence of minor spirits and gods, worlds of parallel existence inhabited by beings with distinguishing features and capacities. Today this knowledge is fused with experiences and competing cosmologies broadcast through the new media. In other words, the lifeworlds brought about through electronic media coexist with the lifeworld of the "Tovil system" in the villages where its cosmology in the past created uncontested actuality.

The Aduras are also aware of the competition that comes with television, particularly from the popular tele-dramas that are transmitted in the evenings. As many work from 0800 to 1800, to be awake throughout a full night's performance is no longer an option for neighbours, friends and family members even if they want to. Moreover, the rituals, the powers and stories about the many supernaturals of the local pantheon, as well as the many "cases" the "Tovil system" deals with are shown, discussed, and presented through the mass

media. This trend is taken very positively by the Aduras I met, who themselves gladly contributed to the production of the programs. In 2006, three of my Adura informants had signed contracts with a weekly television show where they were about to perform as (masked) "clowns" – a job that paid them well and served as a "free advertisement" of their ritual profession. Ritual service has always involved transactions between the sponsor, the client, the ritualists and the supernaturals – and has thus never been fully "freed" from capitalist interest. A sacrifice generates excess by destruction of "something useful" to supernatural consumption says Bataille in his Theory of Religion (1992). A sacrifice carries the generative power of focused intention – a dynamism that is not phenomenally different from the principle of the capital system as a system that reflects the value of human interest. The tendency mentioned by Debord that symbolic worlds turn into commodities is however best illustrated in my work by the concepts of shopping addressed in chapter 1, where the religious ethos of the owners of the shops influence the concepts of their stores – their aesthetics, interiors, and collections on sale. The traditional art shows for tourists, the drum procession of the Indian beauty queen out shopping as described in chapter 1, are expressions of the spectacular turns "Tovil dance" have taken in popular culture.

The changes in the system that I see have taken place in the post colonial area have some dominating features: the "Tovil system" as a ritual practice once celebrated the power of ancient kings and village patrons, and continues today as a practice celebrating politicians and others highly ranked by the state or the communities. The rites persist in being used for the reconstitution of "broken selves" /persons subjected to malevolent supernatural influence. The postcolonial nationalist twist is that the same rituals are publicly performed as shows for the celebration of "Buddhist heritage" – Buddhist Sanskrotike Sandarsena. For the constitution of the community based on Sinhalese Buddhist identity, the performance is done for the blessing of all (shanti karmaya). From being a "language of gods", to borrow Nurnberger's (1998) expression – a dance just performed by initiated specialists – it is today a body language representing a social collective – the Buddhist Sinhalese.

The signification of the "up-country" dancer dressed up in his glimmering silver crowned "Ves" ritual dress has also changed. He is not just an indexical/iconic representation of the Sun God in the Kohombe Kankariya rites, but also an icon of the Buddhist Sinhalese (Reed

2002). The southern equivalent to the Kandyan Ves costume is the Yaka/Raksa mask used in the Tovils. By imitating the simulacra, copying the copy in Baudrillard's (1981) terms, the indexical link to its "original" which in this case is the Sun God or the Yaka is weakened – the signification of the symbols change into icons for Buddhist Sinhalese culture. There are great differences between arts and spectacles in the capitalist commodity culture, which Baudrillard and Debord take as their point of reference, and the Buddhist ethos which the "Tovil dance" engages with. In my view, "Tovil dance" takes an omnipresent position in the phenomenal "hyper reality" of Baudrillard (Ibid.). "Tovil dance" cannot be reduced to being in the "lived in worlds", no matter how many "false" or real copies of the original are made. This is because even though "Tovil dance" has moved out of the ritual context, it continues to be conceived of as a mediating language between all beings of this world (laukika). The semiotic signification of dance is omnipresent, it is independent of space and time. For the religious subject, dance is the creation of gods. There is an important change though in regard to "Tovil dance" in its original ritual context and its traditional shows. The change concerns how dance addresses particular or groups of supernaturals in a Tovil rite with a defined purpose of signification, whereas "Tovil dance" in the traditional dance context becomes reduced to a "commercial" language of honour to the "esteemed man" and gods. The level of complexity in signification and compositional form – aesthetic expression, is reduced in the movement between the contexts.

7.4 State Intervention, Traditionalism and Change

In Chapter 6 I addressed the objectives of the Lankan state, which were to preserve and promote national cultural heritage and traditions. The state programs aimed to help the "traditional artists" to continue with their work in a time with transgressive social, cultural and economic changes. My study of cultural policy in Sri Lanka was carried out with the objective of illuminating the changes of the "Tovil system" put into play by cultural policy bodies, and my field research in 2001-2003 revealed the following areas of operation, which had an impact on the changes of the "Tovil system" – particularly in the field of drumming and dance:

The state manifests its power through the many ceremonies performed in relation to public appearances of politicians, ceremonies performed in their honour and public festivals.

The dancers dance at the ceremonies and through their work help constitute the high symbolic position of the politicians.

The state gives its patronage to the fine arts through an honorary system of competitions and awards. Through public competitions, many Aduras (drummers and dancers) have achieved high recognition and public esteem for their skills. Being awarded diplo-zmas through public competitions throughout their career, strengthens their chances for enrolment into the public pension scheme for traditional artists when they reach the age of 55[33].

The state is a cultural/arts impresario, producing public art shows and ceremonies, administrating the national dance troupe and promoting local artists and material culture internationally. The Aduras that I know, have taken on many an assignment from the government administration, and some have also represented Sri Lanka abroad.

The state supports public facilities at monuments and buildings such as temples and cultural centres. They also provide support to important religious festivals and pilgrimages. At some festivals the Aduras are engaged to perform "Deva Tovil" or "Gammaduva" rites or to participate in the growing numbers of temple processions – the Perahera.

The many publicly supported village dance schools (Kala Yatanas), dance classes at schools and at culture centres. as well as the Institute of Aesthetic Studies at Alfred Crescent, "produce" traditional dancers. These institutions serve as a resource base for the state in the sense that the drummers and dancers who are employed as dance teachers or in the public dance troupes, who perform at the many public greeting ceremonies, traditional art shows, processions at temple festivals and at the national dance festival are affiliated with these institutions.

An interplay between these activities is taking place in recent developments in the "Tovil system". As we have already looked into some of the areas of performance, I will now focus on the role played by education and state patronage in development of the Tovils. Reed (2002) emphasises the role of state sponsorship in relation to the continuation of public performances of the Kohombe Kankariya rite – the ritual of the up-country ritualists. And today, at least from the southern viewpoint, there is a mixture between the agency of the

[33] I received inaccurate information in regard to what role such diplomas actually played in enrolment. My Adura informants nonetheless believe that the diplomas are important in order to get into the scheme.

state governed renaissance of the ritual traditions and the gradual adoption of a market economy – global tourism and migration that together form the base of contemporary practice. Many of the traditional art shows that I viewed in the period of 1996–1997 were arranged by local "idealists" representing different local organisations such as Rotary, Lions Club, Young Buddhist Association, or by individual sponsors – all with a taste and sentiment for the "traditional arts" (Larsen 1998). The Adura troupes performing in these events were presented as "authentic" traditional ritualists. During my periods of research my network of ritualists never took on any job as entertainers for visiting tourists. The influences on the "Tovil system" from the tourist industry are great in the south-western stretch between Bentara – Galle in the south, but not yet as great in the region where I worked, eastwards from Weligama – Matara – Hambantota – up to the UVA region in the north. In other words, as "authentic traditional artists" the Aduras of Matara, in the main addressed a local audience. "The state" and "the local/patron" are in other words preferred as promoters of "traditional arts" performances by the Adura community in the Matara region.

In Sri Lanka the history, language, customs and rituals of the ancient Buddhist kingdoms referred to in chapter 6, form the narrative of continuation for the post colonial nation. In countries serving as models for the architects of the post-colonial Lankan state, such as Japan, India (Kerela in particular) and the USSR, dance was given national recognition. Unlike Sri Lanka, the artists of these countries enjoyed high social status, whereas the Aduras inherited the subordinate caste position as ceremonial servants. Their dance form was also recognised by the international dance community as highly refined (Nurnberger 1998) and proved to be a valuable cultural asset for politicians in the quest for international recognition of Sri Lanka as a civilised nation.

According to Plaffenberger (1981) one of the challenges of the post-colonial Lankan state was to unite the Sinhalese as one ethnic group. The Buddhist Sinhalese were not just one homogenous group, but a mixed network of "clans" and "social polities", with distinctive social, religious and cultural practices. In the history of Sri Lanka regional centres formed in relation with the ancient kingdoms, "feudal lords" and the district authorities of the colonial administrations. Due to the endogamous nature of "territorial caste clans" living in these regions, the ancient patron/client structures of duties and loyalties at work between caste

groups, as well as the contemporary superior position of the politically elected "District MP" and his officers, the regional centres continue to play a central role in local politics.

Today the state operates with three key cultural regions of the Buddhist Sinhalese: The "up-country" – Uda Rata, embrace the traditions of Kandy/the central province, the "low-country" – Pahata Rata, includes the traditions of the districts of Galle, Matara and Hambantota in the southern province, and the Saburugamuwa tradition refers to the arts developed in the central western region of Sri Lanka. The difference between the dancing traditions of these regions is, according to the late dancer Pani Bharata, one of technique, style and rhythm. The up-country-dance is perceived as more feminine (lake) than the masculine (tando) low-country style.

The Adura families living in these regions have traditionally intermarried with each other. The principle of endogamous caste clans has efficiently contributed to the development and upheaval of distinct ritual traditions, and among the Aduras themselves, they add the Bentara tradition to the list of distinctive dance traditions. Bentara is located on the border of the southern and western province of the island. In relation with the ritual work of the Aduras, there is a variation in regard to which gods and demons form the centre of the cults. For instance, the Kohombe Kankariya rite is in the centre of the ritual practice of the Bereva ritualists in the Central Province – a rite that is not performed by my "low-country" informants. Moreover, the rites connected with the cult of the god "Devol Devi" in which the Aduras participate, developed, according to my information, in the Bentara region. The traditions are not homogenous though, as there are many families of ritual specialists involved and each one represents variations in ritual procedures, style and repertoire. These variations are however accepted as part of the "tradition".

In Bauman's (1997) view, traditions are not custom or habit, but rather the opposite. Tradition is that which is strictly moved by human agency. As he says: "It is all about thinking, reasoning, justifying, and first and foremost about choice" (Ibid., 1997: 14). Bauman (1997) states that the invention of tradition has been necessary in the "global" nation-building projects so as to build the illusion of a heterogeneous society and culture, and he finds evidence that those traditional practices or institutions are legitimised by their

reference to an external autonomous source of becoming in the past. The notion of "becoming in the past" makes Bauman's conception of tradition very similar to religious systems like the "Tovil system", of which every being, every object or aesthetic media used, every ritual procedure has a story of origin. In my view, Bauman's assumptions are useful in the interpretation of the Lankan context. To preserve and to teach local artistic traditions and customs to the next generation, through public education bodies, has been prioritised by the politicians of the post colonial Sri Lankan nation in, with Debord's (1967) words: "their search for lost unity". The post-colonial Lankan governments have, from my point of view, acted as leaders of social groups which: "possess a collective conscience whose historical roots are in some distant past and are not easily changeable but are potentially available to ignition by new historical and political contingencies" (Appadurai, 1996: 141).

Debord's (1967, #180) statement that: "Culture is the locus of the search for lost unity. In the course of this search, culture as a separate sphere is obliged to negate itself" fits well in the Sri Lankan Buddhist nationalist context as the identification and negotiation of religious/artistic expressions from the diverse pool of systems into three great traditions played into the Buddhist renaissance movement of the early post-colonial years. Many post modern thinkers, along with Debord and Bauman, have abandoned the modernist claim for unity and homogeneity and brought forth an understanding of cultural/religious realities as "systemic" fragments in the pursuit of a whole. The negation, which occurs in the search for shared traditions, received in Sri Lanka the expression of public "standardisation" of the Sinhala language and "cultural/religious" practice such as "Tovil dance" as addressed in chapter 6.

The creation of the dance classes and a university degree in dance are substantially different in orientation and content than the concept of ritual procedures in regard to the concept of "standardisation" processes involved in the creation of "traditions". I suggest that a phenomenal definition of tradition could simply be: "To be continued." Tradition is the wish for a recurrence of events and the reproduction of material, technology and skills required to bring the events or objects about successfully. On the aesthetic level, the public are motivated by the wish for repetition of the experience brought about through the event, or in the material world, their desire for material objects. The artist as an imitator is the one

with the urge to imitate the aesthetical compositional forms – re-actualise its "immanent" energy of aesthetic excess. The creator is the one with the creative need to innovate and develop established compositional formulas. In the religious realm, repetition and cyclic continuation of aesthetically formed ritual work, are a necessity and not a mere wish. In the Sri Lankan context I have argued that culture, arts and religion are three of a kind – the concept of tradition has in this context thus an aspect of "necessity" attached. In the perspective of the difference between continuation, replication of "classical" performance and novelty in arts, George Kubler has suggested that; "The replications of tradition, endlessly repeated, belong to time; the novelties of invention, each a one-off, belong to history" (Ingold and Hallam 2007: 10). That is to say, innovations create historical moments, but soon their novelty is forgotten and the replication/repetition/re-enactment of the new creation is soon perceived as the tradition. In the "Tovil system" the level of innovation is restricted by the compositional form and structure of the original rites. In addition to the necessity of doing the rituals once in a while to please the gods there is also an urgent need to do everything correctly, which limits the degree of innovation that is possible in ritual work. The reason for this is that if one does not plead with the supernaturals at the times they are used to, or if a priest performs ritual acts incorrectly, the wrath of gods and demons can fall upon the priest, subjects, the community, the nation – even the world. The dreaded consequences that are waiting if one fails to carry out ritual procedures correctly and in time, makes ritual performance conventional, traditional and in the ontological vein just like the original, and helps the system to continue its existence endlessly. It takes on a phenomenal existence in a time/space compression detached from historical time. Despite the dogmatic nature of rituals, changes evidently take place. At the end I will come back to the dynamics of change, but before we reach that point there are some more subjects to be considered.

7.5 Changes in the Teaching Structures

7.5.1 The Development of a University Degree in Traditional Dance

The Institute of Aesthetic studies (Saundarya Vishwe Vidiyaleya) at Alfred Crescent, in Colombo, which today offers university degrees in the fields of dance, music and fine arts, opened on 1st of May 1974. The status of dance in Sri Lankan culture, and the many arenas

of performance and teaching opportunities, has made the study quite popular. Most of the contemporary students of dance are women, which in relation to the "Tovil system" is quite interesting as ritual work is still taboo for women.

In the opening year, the institute took over the teaching of the Government school of fine arts at Alfred Crescent, Horton place, in Colombo, a school that had been running since 1949. Before that however, the Ceylon Technical College at Maradane had offered classes in fine arts since it opened in 1893. The late national icon of up-country dance, Pani Bharata was put in charge of the development of the dance syllabus at Alfred Crescent and therefore, in the early years at Alfred Crescent, they just had a degree in Kandyan dance on offer as it was the dance form best known to the permanent staff (Nurnberger 1998). Other Sri Lankan dance forms were nonetheless taught by visiting teachers. As affiliations continued to be important for the Bereva clan in charge of the institute, the first teacher in "low-country dance" to be called in was the brother-in-law of Pani Bharata from Bentara.

In 1978, at the institute, which up to now had offered a practical degree, a working/planning committee was appointed by the vice chancellor at the University with the objective of making a new syllabus and regulations suitable for the institute in its new organisational form. Prof. Tissakariyawasam, who I interviewed in order to understand the history of the institute, was appointed as chairman of this committee. In June 1980 Prof. Tissakariyawasam was appointed as the new director of the institute, a post he held for three periods (of 3 years). The new syllabus developed throughout the Tissakariyawasam period was to include all styles, and new teachers had to be recruited. Consequently the superior position at the institute held by the family of Pani Bharata was lost. However, a degree in low-country-dance was not, according to the staff at Alfred Crescent interviewed in 2003, possible to confer before the early 1990s. In the field of dance, the first problem that the new director had to deal with was the fact that not a single one of the teachers had any higher educational background themselves. Most of them had not even finished O-level exams. The first generation of teachers were initiated dancers and drummers of the "Tovil system". The teachers were members of the Bereva caste, which in the beginning also meant that they were relatives of the national master of the "up-country" tradition (Gurunanse) – Pani Bharata. The department solved the "lack of qualification problem" among the teaching staff

by honouring them with a University degree at master's level, and employed them as university lecturers. With their new titles and positions came higher salaries. To meet the need for higher qualifications amongst the staff in charge of the dance and drumming classes at Alfred Crescent, a PhD grant was awarded to the Sri Jayawardenapura University, for the Sinhala Department (where Prof. Tissakariyawasam used to work). Prof. Mudiyanse Dissanayaka, who later was given the position as the director of the institute, received the grant and received the first PhD degree done on the subject of Sri Lankan dance. Two out of four scholarships offered to the government by the Indian Culture Centre, were also given to the institute. This led to a long cooperation with a professional dance school in Madurai in South India (Madras), where visiting teachers (and students) received training in the Bharata Natyam and Kathakali dance forms and gained inspiration and ideas for how to develop their own classes.

The process of formalising traditional dance to make it a fit subject for a university degree was in other words not a smooth operation. The Gurunanses in charge of the program did not have relevant experience from the school system. They did not, among other things, know anything about teaching the theory of dance and other subjects that required examinations in written form. As Susan Reed notes, the trouble faced by the traditional ritualists in this situation led their new colleagues to create a distinction between the: "Traditional dancers (as) associated with body, emotion and instinct and the middle – class dancers with mind and reason. Bereva dancers (became) marginalised by this emphasis on theory and stress on a more academic approach to music and dance because of their relative lack of formal education in relation to high-caste dancers" (Reed, 1998: 261). Nevertheless, Reed reports that with the new titles and improved salaries the lecturers acted as if they had teaching competence on this level, even though they were unqualified as tutors. In the world of Debord's capitalist spectacle: "The loss of quality is so obvious that every level of the language of the spectacle, from the objects it lauds to the behaviour it regulates, merely echoes the basic traits of a real production process that shuns reality" (Debord, 1967: #38). His concerns are shared by the dance teachers in Sri Lanka who were also concerned about the dimension of skills in relation with a possible continuation of the ritual traditions. Pani

Bharatha states in the "Daily News" 12.11.2003[34], "I am badly disappointed over what has happened to our great dancing traditions. The standards have come down beyond imagination. It is so sad to see the poor state of dancing… It's so ugly to watch some dances. The television is responsible for this deterioration. If someone does not intervene it would be a disaster." What Pani Bharatha was concerned about was that despite the popularity of dance and the number of practitioners, the capacity of the dancers had not reached the professional level (physical abilities and knowledge of the different dance combinations – the ritual texts), which he and his contemporaries had developed. "The accumulation of fragmentary knowledge which becomes useless in that any endorsement of existing conditions must eventually entail rejection of that knowledge itself, and on the other hand, the theory of practice, which alone has access, not only to the truth of all the knowledge in question, but also to the secret of its use", states Debord, (1967:#185). Debord's observation addresses crucial aspects of "ritual work" (Tovil vedde). In order to be knowledgeable on the system one has to know the "teacher secrets", but also to take on the time consuming practice at ritual venues. The articulated knowledge of the system, as I presented in chapters 4 and 5, is at its best offers memory keys and pragmatic tools that structure the compositional plane of the practice, but the knowledge is fragmented in the sense that it cannot imitate nor mediate the phenomenal existence of a Tovil rite. The transformation of a field of practical knowledge and skills into a theoretical subject, and the decree of evaluating a student in a practical field in terms of their theoretical knowledge of the field, has been a matter of dispute in all categories of sports, arts and crafts in the West, not only in dance in Sri Lanka. The dance syllabus taught at Alfred Crescent included the training of the basic rhythmic patterns, swirls, figures and poses of the traditions and drumming, the "standard dance items" from the great pool of ritual acts and songs. The theory of dance taught at the institute is inspired by the Indian tradition developed from the classical work on dance dramaturgy and aesthetics – the "Natyasastra". In other words, at the institute the students learn the art of dance and not ritual work (Tovil vedde). The role transformation of the Gurunanses into university teachers had a positive effect on their social position. The social status and esteem of the Adura community as a whole was improved by their new position as teachers at the university, dancers of the nationally

[34] A quote from an article written by my assistant, who was also a journalist, on my interviews with Pani Bharatha:

acclaimed traditional arts, their role in public ceremonies, the national dance troupe, the provincial dance troupes, the army dance troupe, their role as judges at competitions among dance groups from the many Kala Yatanas (dance schools), their position within the Arts Council, as well as the many new positions created for dancers educated at the institute, in public schools and dance schools (and now also at the culture centres).

7.5.2 Recruitment

When I asked about the caste background of the teachers at the institute in 2003, I was told that all of the permanent lecturers but one were Berevas. Susan Reed‘s (1998) informants have given her different information as they claimed that high caste practitioners had replaced the Bereva lecturers. However, we had corresponding information on the Bereva student situation. They were no longer in the majority. Moreover, to my knowledge, (and this is not mentioned by Reed) only one of the teachers of traditional dance at the institute today, has been initiated into the "Tovil system", and has actually performed in ritual events.

The early students at Alfred Crescent, according to Tissakariyawasam, did not have formal entrance qualifications, but were recruited at auditions on the basis of practical skills. With a very few exceptions, all of these students were of the Bereva caste. The situation changed in 1977 when dance was introduced as a separate subject for A-level examination at high school. From 1980 onwards the students needed A-level examinations to enter the institute.

With the introduction of formal education criteria, the caste privilege of the Berevas, their *sahadje daksjeta* – a right (and duty) to practise dance and drumming given by birth – no longer gave them privileged access to the institute. This change in qualifications was met by protests from the Bereva community since the art of dance and drumming had been the intellectual property of the caste group for generations. Another problem related to the change was brought up by Prof. Tissakariyawasam who said that the Kala Yatana's (dance institutes), which were the resource base for the recruitment to the institute, did not introduce the children to the art of dancing in the right way. In his view, the Kala Yatana's run by non – Gurunanses had failed in their mission of providing basic dance training for professional dancers to be. He complained that he had seen examples of students getting new costumes and doing their first public performance of a "wannama" (imitation of birds

or an animal dance) after only three months of training. To him the children were let onto the stage all too easily, no standards were required and they reached their goals without any effort. Pani Bharata expressed similar concerns and emphasised that it is important to learn all the traditions, preferably from a Gurunanse, before starting to dance on stage. The criticism did not only concern the hindrance created for the Aduras in keeping exclusive access to the practice of the traditions developed by their caste. Many of those recruited on the basis of A-level exams were not trained dancers, and the Bereva caste members knew dance distinctively better as they had practised it from their early childhood. With the aim of meeting the complaint of the Bereva community, and to prevent a further lowering of the level of practical skills among the students, an exclusive entry for ten talented students based on a practical test only was given by the institute to the Bereva community. The arrangement was highly disputed and after one year, it was decided that everyone should be recruited on the basis of formal qualifications. In 1986, the first students were enrolled as master students in Kandyan dance, where (ideally) they followed a four-year syllabus towards graduation. A M.A. degree in "Saburugamuwa" and "low-country" dance was introduced in the early 1990s. Because of the dramatic lowering of performance levels among the students throughout these years, a practical audition has now been reintroduced as an entrance requirement in addition to the formal A-level exam.

Many complained that the institute was badly managed, a claim whose validity I have not investigated. What I understood though is that due to the popularity of the subjects offered at the institute and the many qualified recruits, the students had to wait for up to five years from finishing A-level exams before they could start their studies. Consequently the age of the students when they started to learn dance at the institute was about 24-25 years. In comparison, the pupil of a traditional master would have been 5–8 years old when starting his training. A professional dancer of classical dance experiences the peak of their careers at the age of 20–35. I followed some promising dance students whom I met in the fieldwork down south, and who enrolled in 2003. The waiting list was shorter then as they expected to wait just two years before they could start on their degree. Delays were also common in relation to the finalising of graduation papers. In December 2003 the faculty held a ceremony for the students who were examined in the summer of 1999 – 4 1/2 years earlier. Moreover, to get their certificates the students had to pay a relatively high fee in advance. It

was explained that the delay in the procedures was caused by lack of funds. By the end of 2003, the institute had about 900 students, and that year about 130 passed the final examination. The work opportunities for these students were not so plentiful as in the past, during the years of the establishment of the contemporary 1200 Kala Yatanas and implementation of traditional dance in the syllabus at the primary schools. Today, very few new posts as dance-teachers are available. Few public funds are available for professional art productions in any field. However, actual developments in the field of stage dance/traditional dance in Sri Lanka are beyond the scope of my thesis.

7.5.3 The Ritual Texts

In my research I have come across many popular South Asian classics that have evidently inspired the ritual work of the Aduras. Texts on Vedic offering rituals (RgVeda, Atharva-veda, Sathapatha Brahmana), Divine Icons (Vastusutra Upanisad), Buddhist psychology (Abhidamma) and Indian theatre (Natyasastra) provide workable models for the design of the multi-faceted ritual actions of the "Tovil system". University scholars have developed a textual tradition on the Yak Tovil rituals of their own. Throughout the last century, anthropologists, made neat ethnographic records of the system and its many aspects, and these have contributed to the general knowledge of rituals and their field of operation. Today standard ritual procedures are considered a theoretical subject at the Institute of Aesthetic studies. The lecturers at the institute; Jayasena Kotagoda and Mudiyanse Dissanayake in particular, have written extensively on different rituals and their procedures. Mudianse Dissanayake has also written an important dictionary on aesthetic and ritual concepts used by the students at the institute. However, to learn the Tovils requires the study of sound, words, form and movement, and any text will come up short as a representation of ritual work. In the chapter on the Rata Yakuma I have given some translated examples of ritual texts since the texts explain, among other things, the origin of the rite, the diagnostic process, the origin of the supernaturals offered to, and the offering procedures. Therefore, despite their incompleteness in regard to the study of ritual performance, ritual texts are the most valuable property for the Adura practitioners. The pragmatic potential of ritual texts is another dimension of their status among ritualists, and in the following I will take a look at some explanations of why sound and text are given such power.

According to Susan Langer: "Music is at its highest clearly a symbolic form, is an unconsummated symbol. Articulation is its life but not assertion, expressiveness not expression. Music is significant form without conventional significance" (Ibid., 1964: 204). Langer's ideas of music as a significant form without conventional significance are heavily challenged by the indexical potential of sound in Sri Lankan rituals. In the ancient Vedic universe, the cosmology that the "Tovil system" is connected to, the mantra (sound) "Ohm" correlates with Brakma who is the creator of all of the worlds of this world. Following the cosmology of Tantric Buddhist Tibetans, the creator of the universe, its micro as well as macro cosmos is: "Sabdha Brahman; where Sabdha is a ringing sound." The following illustrates the meaning of the concept as illuminated in this tradition: "The creative power of Sabdha-Brahman is Maha-Kundali in the macrocosm and the Kundalini in the microcosm. This aspect of the Sabdha Brahman is the divine mother of the universe: Maha-Sakti or Maha-Devi. Behind the creation stands a consciousness – the most comprehensive consciousness, which exists, called Cit or Samvit. This aspect of Sabdha-Brahman is also mentioned under the name of Siva. Siva is described as the unchangeable static aspect of the great consciousness, while Sakti represents the dynamic, active side of the same consciousness. It is Sakti who has created the five elements (Mahabutas) from the finest (Akasa) to the grossest (Prthivi)" (O. M. Hinze (1981: 35-36). The sounds of the Tovils are mantras (charms), songs (kavi), drums and the vasdanda (pipe) – sounds which are all conceived to be an extension of the "pure consciousness" and energy of the universe. In the Tovils the utterance of mantras serves highly pragmatic ends, and in Tantric metaphysics the Mantra is "an instrument of thought…It is a more intense and effective thought… connected with a concentrated form of speech, endowed with special potency and efficacy." (Padoux 1990: 373). As such, it is a language different from that accompanying empirical realities.

In the Tovil rituals the words spoken out in the many kavis (songs) and mantras (charms) have a similar pragmatic indexical meaning as the mantra "Ohm" as they enable direct communication with the supernaturals of the Sri Lankan Buddhist pantheon. According to the Aduras it is the kavis (the songs), the mantra (magical stanzas, the sound forms of supernaturals), slokas (words of blessing), kannalauwas (praising verses) and other categories

of texts written in verse, that are at the core of their ritual practice. The verses are written in a mnemonic form, and through the knowledge of the texts the ritualists remember what to do, when, and how. Some verses are put into special categories according to the particular ends they serve. For instance one type of verse can be very good for lime cutting – useful for dispelling black magic or cutting unwanted bonds between a "patient" and supernaturals, and is classified as more or less powerful (dangerous in regard to the personal safety of those involved in the rite, and thus more or less effective) in the act of doing so. How many versions exist of the core myths relating to this practice and the exact number of texts is not possible for me to say, but there are many. An Adura I know has collected widely and has a spacious chest full of nicely written texts in olaleaf and notebooks. A good collection of texts exists at the National Museum in Colombo. Hugh Nevill's collection is still the largest record made and the published catalogue consists of about 900 examples (H. Nevill 1955). According to the catalogue of the British Library his collection contains about 2500 myths. His personal notes on the collection that he created while on duty as a civil servant for the British colony administration in 1869–1886 are published, but the originals have unfortunately been lost. What this means is that a complete collection of ritual texts is not in the possession of one particular person, but is collectively owned by networks of ritual specialists. These people cooperate in many ways, not only in relation with the rites, since they are of the same caste clan, but as I experienced in the field, Aduras befriend each other by exchanging texts, a teacher teaches texts to his students and students can occasionally, if they show great talent for the practice, be recruited from outside the Bereva community. Loyalties formed in this way may transcend caste boundaries. The texts are written without explicit reference to their author, and many copies contain more or less elaborate versions of the same stories. The more elaborate the version, the more valuable the manuscript is for the Aduras. The time available for the rites (as well obviously as what myths they know) dictates which version is used. As far as I know, ritual texts are not composed any more. Poetry as a refined aesthetic practice has not been encouraged in the training given by the Gurunanses. There is no professional role given in the "Tovil system" to composers of ritual texts. The creative comedy dialogue between the drummer and the Adura during the rite, exemplified in the transcriptions given in the chapter on the Rata Yakuma, are the closest one comes to innovation of ritual texts. For fun, popular songs are often included in the comedy dialogue between the "mask appearance acts" of the supernaturals – but these songs are not created

by the Aduras. A mantra specialist can create new charms by making use of the dictionaries on mantra sounds and their pragmatic ends and godly connections. A "charmer" nonetheless perceives old mantras as more powerful than new ones. I reason that the need for new texts correlates with new "births" or creations of supernatural "avatars", and the collective of supernaturals offered to by the Aduras are fewer with every generation and are not expanding. The historical socio/political context, the historical characters and sorts of events that the "Tovil system" takes as its point of reference are in continual change. However, as the Rata Yakuma rite remembers many cults that have formed and dissolved through history, the Aduras showed talent in introducing new elements which keep it "up to date" and I suggest that in the future there will be new 'standard" ritual texts evolving out of their creative innovations and inclusions of popular songs.

7.5.4 Tovil Knowledge: Ayurveda, Aesthetics and the "Mantra Man"

The fields of "Tovil dance" /drama, drumming and songs are classified as aesthetics, and are well preserved in public teaching institutions and promoted through other public institutions. What is not so often mentioned in relation to the "Tovil system" is that it makes rich reference to the flora and fauna of the island. The "offering menus" include a plurality of arts to be collected by the hosts in advance of the rites. Moreover, the diets prescribed to the patient of the rites for the general improvement of his/her health condition, work on the principles of Ayurvedic medicine. To balance the bodily humours (wate, pitte, sema) is the goal of Ayurvedic treatment as well as Tovil cures. Ayurvedic treatment is very popular in Sri Lanka in general, and there is a noticeable collective of practitioners in literally every tiny village pocket of the island. The most common "offering menus" of the "Tovil system" are available as standard packets at the local Ayurvedic medicine outlet. Some of my Adura informants also developed good affiliations with staff at the Ministry of Ayurvedic Medicine at Battaramulla, the Ministry responsible for the training of practitioners and for the governmental Ayurvedic hospitals, where they were regularly invited to perform.

The "preservation" of the medical knowledge and the aesthetic skills of the "Tovil system" are thus, to use the language of the public cultural policy programs, "preserved" and "promoted" for future generations. The third division of the "Tovil system" has never had a university department of its own, and if it had it would perhaps have been named "the magic

department". I understand that the auspicious nature of charms, offerings and spells – all the taboos and ritual dangers related with ritual work of the Aduras – has had a say in the priorities. In Sri Lanka, the phenomenal powers of mantras are respected. But, still it is not a field of practice that has attained public recognition. To be a "mantra man" or to engage with people of this profession, still carries a wide range of social taboos. As I will return to, the focus on the Aduras as dancers – traditional artists – has offered them a "public status" which in many contexts helps them escape the sort of public sanctions and rules of demeanour used against members of their "caste" and profession in the past. The Berevas, who choose to specialise in charms, are not able to climb into this sphere of local recognition and fame as traditional artists. They remain priests communicating with lower spirits and demons. Padoux (1990) draws attention to the fact that the positive outcome of a charm is dependent on correct intonation, a skill which today can be learnt through the transmission of audio recordings. But the skill of intonation alone cannot help the charmer of the "Tovil system" as he also has to learn how to recognise the phenomenal nature of "anivina", "kodivina", "dosa" and other sorts of misfortune in the agency of "lower spirits" and "demons". To deal with the physical powers involved takes courage and training under a trusted guru. Many mantras bring about bodily transformations of the mantra man's own body and many a mantra man has died during ritual work. To get into the phenomenal world that the mantra engages with also requires embodied experience, ritual knowledge and skills that are only accessible through participation in ritual events. The "Aduras" as priests and Gurunanses, are in control of who they choose to be their students – thus the Aduras are still in a superior position as teachers in relation to this aspect of Tovil work.

7.6 Status Transformed. From Low Caste to Traditional Arts Celebrities

If one uses my informants as an example of the social status of the Aduras in Sri Lankan society, I will argue that the present position of "Tovil dance" in popular culture has made the network of Aduras that actually know the "right thing" and come from "the right caste" into at least regional if not also national celebrities. I started my research in 1996, and I was therefore late in regard to experiencing the transformations recorded from 1980 until 1995 (Simpson, 1997 and Reed, 2002) where ritual work was "abandoned" by the Bereva communities both in the up-country and low-country region due to the low social esteem it

held as well as the decreasing demand for their ritual duties. Reed argues that the revitalising status of dance in the Lankan post-colonial state made the Berevas one of the only service castes that embraced their caste status (Susan Reed 2002, pp 264) – while others sought ways to escape their lot such as changing their names, moving from their village, changing profession and, as Reed points out, changing manners, dress and language (gestures and language gestures, speech codes that could reveal their status) or doing other tricks which would cover up their real caste status. She emphasises the way high castes kept using the demeanours of social conduct, which put them in a superior position in relation to people from lower castes. This point was confirmed to me by the former leader of the National Arts Council Mr. Fernando, who I interviewed in Kandy, as one of the reasons for why the Aduras in the "up-country" had given up their caste profession. The Berevas were trapped in the dilemma that a reproduction of their work meant to reproduce their low caste identity. Simpson makes a point of the connection between the low social status of the ritualists and the dynamics of shame (connected with the status) as an agent in the collective abandonment of their traditional profession in the seventies and eighties. Simpson concludes however that there is a positive tendency: in the nineties the younger generation experienced fewer stigmas than their forefathers.

In the field I found that there is a wide range of social taboos connected with the work of the Aduras. The malevolent nature of the supernaturals that they deal with, the delicate social or private situations of their clients, the bodily and socially transgressive nature of their ritual work, and the fact that many of them make malevolent spells to harm others, are some of the features of their ritual profession that make them "suspicious" as social persons. Their greatest challenges in regard to the question of a possible continuation have in my view been that the Aduras are ritualists in a cult of malevolent supernaturals. This is the greatest obstacle for the Aduras to overcome in relation to the continuation of the practice. I emphasise that the Aduras themselves negotiate between the many roles and statuses quite elegantly. Nonetheless, some informants of mine were, like those of Reed, worried about the prospects of "Tovil work". One in particular was troubled and let his son go to school until he was 16 years old before he finally made up his mind and took him along to rituals. He himself was then the most active Adura of the Matara region, but despite his fame and many innovative creations as a "traditional artist", he had been uncertain of the future in the cult in

which he was a ritualist. However, the present status of the traditional ritual arts, and the indisputable stage talent of his son, as well as the lack of a real alternative to a professional career as a drummer/dancer, had helped change his mind. The rise of status of Tovil rites into the Buddhist ritual sphere, and the fact that the ritual tradition has become acknowledged by the Buddhist clergy as "shanti karmaya" and "Sinhalese Buddhist heritage" suggests the rise in status of the whole system, just as the "traditional artist" role did in the past.

The difference in the social position reported by Simpson and Reed, is in my view related to the fact that the break in the caste privilege of drumming and dancing happened earlier and more significantly in relation with the "up-country" traditions, than the "low-country". The "stage dance" productions created by the late Chitrasena and his dance school developed the classical "up-country" dance into new movements of form (Nurnberger, 1997). The late Chitrasena was from the high farmer caste, and had learned up-country dance from a Gurunanse. The second central representative for traditional "up-country dance" was Pani Bharata, one of those who "invented" the standardised up-country style of dance. Pani Bharata himself came from a family of traditional ritualists in the Kohombe Kankariya cult. Throughout his career he learned to manage Indian Kathakali and Bharata Natyam in addition to the up-country style. Pani Bharata started the first National Dance Troupe in the sixties, and was responsible for the first syllabus of the Institute of Aesthetic Studies where he also worked. He was also a long time member and leader of the Traditional Dance panel of the Arts Council (1954–2001). Throughout these years the Kandy dancer gained an iconic status for the Buddhist Sinhalese, which the low-country dancers are still unable to match. The movement towards this superior position of the "up-country" traditions within the Sri Lankan nation, is linked with the fact that the early leading politicians of the Lankan state came from "aristocratic" clans in the central hill country (Jayawardena, 2000). These clans were part of the "rayakariya" network to which the "up-country" Berevas for generations had served as ceremonial drummers and dancers. The family of Pani Bharata had been in the service of the last king of Kandy (who submitted to the British colonisers in the 1850s). The dancers of the "traditional arts" scene in Colombo, particularly in the programs that I attended at the public culture centre "John DeSilva", which is under the authority of the Department of Cultural Affairs, was during my fieldwork in 2002, still dominated by

practitioners of the up-country style. The central position of the up-country Aduras in the temple procession at the annual temple festival at the Kandyan temple – a highly sacred place for local Buddhists – has also contributed to their superior position. The low-country Aduras do not have a compatible history of "ritual service" for a Buddhist king, such as performances at his temple festivals, but are first and foremost affiliated with the "cult of the Yakku" in the south. If we trust Simpson and Reed's information, the low-country style had a secondary status as "Buddhist tradition" up to my research period between 1996 and 2003. This again means that the cultural policy of the ruling party of the period, the SLFP, was important for the "inclusion of all regional traditions" in teaching institutions and public cultural/religious programs that I have recorded.

To establish what sort of effect the Aduras as a community had on the transformations taking place throughout the last century requires more research in regard to the low-country traditions. However, it is certainly true that all of the people in public art administration, arts education, the national arts council and at the department of culture took the view that the state had played a crucial role in helping the Aduras continue their practices as ritualists and as traditional dancers. Grand senior Aduras like Pani Bharata from Kandy and S.L.H Fernando from Matara felt that their own work had been essential in this regard. Both had first and foremost made a career as "public servants" in the national dance troupe as 'teachers' and not as traditional ritualists. The continuation of the "Tovil system" and "Tovil dance" into its many new arenas is, in other words a joint effort between many different agents.

7.6.1 The Agency of Honour and Money

The public award system introduced from 1984 created a competitive alternative to the ancient system of rank held by the Aduras themselves. The ritualist starts out as a gåliya – a student, and then becomes an initiated Adura. In his senior years the Adura become a Maha Chari – a specialist and leader of rituals. Pani Bharata, the esteemed up-country dancer said to me in an interview that: "The Ministry has given me many names of honour. I have been awarded Kalakiri, Kalasuri, and honorary PhD Acharea, at the Keleniya University. Kalasuri is the highest honour, but Acharea is much higher than those awards. From the state I have received everything except money. I come from a line of traditional dancers that served the

king. I am not after money. Money is important because if one brings people to dance one has to serve them. Everyone treats me very honourably and praises my painting, sculptures and my dance. I am well known, but I am also a poor man. I do not ask others for money. Aesthetically I am very rich." The Kalabochana title was meant to be a pension scheme for artists, but to Pani Bharata that was just a piece of paper. "No benefit has been obtained from this title. The pension I receive comes from my teaching. I get no pension from my dance practice." The grand senior Adura S.L.H Fernando from Matara gave me a similar list of awards and honourable positions, but did not complain about the economic situation of the traditional dancer. In fact he seemed quite content with his life's achievements. In 1958 he joined the civil service and in 1963 he was recruited to the national dance troupe. The job took him to 48 countries. He also held several public positions and mentioned his engagements at the Sri Lanka board of arts (in the Arts council), the National dancing sub board, the Department of Culture, his own Kala Yatana which he named Sampath, and the "Association of low-country dancers" of which he is the founding president. He mentioned to me a list of 9 honorary titles and awards, including the Kalasuri which was highly regarded by Pani Bharata. The other titles mentioned were the Nathya-Shiromani Kala-Buchana Kala-Ratna, Janadipathi Sammana, Raja Narthanna, Ruhunu Parhika, Bathi puda upahara, Guru Bethi Puda Upahara. Interestingly, all of the "honours" were given him from the 1990s to the present (2002). Susan Reed mentions the importance of certificates and degrees to create the new status of the dancers of the "up-country", and Bob Simpson notes that there is a competition between the dancers in the "low-country" in regard to achieving public acclaim as artists. In particular, the Kala Buchana title, which was introduced in 1984 by the UNP, has gained popularity. As I mentioned in chapter 6, the title is linked to the "public pension scheme" for traditional artists provided by the government. The title is given to artists on the recommendation of governmental officers in their districts or provinces, and today the pension fund provides the artists with 800 RS (£10 in 2003) in yearly allowance. In comparison a ritualist earns 1500–3000 RS for one ritual job.

In accordance with the duty of the Rayakariya (work for the king) system, the Aduras were obliged to carry out ritual service to the temple and to their co-villagers. For their service they were paid with land, crops, and goods. Today, money is a very important asset for ritual specialists too, as the exchanges of services and crops taking place within the subsistence

economy system failed to cover basic needs. I have not investigated what sort of duty the Aduras uphold in relation to their co-villagers and at temples, but in relation to Tovil work, the normal payment is money. As shown in chapter 6, status and good deeds can work as payment for Tovil rites. How dependent the Aduras are on the goodwill of their "patrons" can be exemplified by the following case. It was around midnight that the rain started splashing down. The Aduras were half way into the Maha Samayama rite at the Maharagama show, and the thousands who had gathered fled the open venue. The Aduras however continued their "Maha Samayama" dance for a long while for a small group of people, until the mud made it too slippery to dance. They refused to give up their show, and after three hours of waiting, the weather cleared and they tried to finish their performance. The attempt was in vain and despite their brave efforts and the mantra man ended up doing the most necessary closures of the offerings that the supernaturals had been invited to "enjoy" on his own, without the customary elaborate dance and drum accompaniment. As they had failed to delivering a full nights performance, the fee to the ritualists was halved. As they did not have contracts with their partners, and were not insured, they just had to accept the payment decided on by the organisers of the show.

According to Simpson's observations on the Adura's general income, it was not before the 1990s that they began to achieve a decent payment for their services (Simpson, 1997). Ritual service he notes (particularly the elaborate rituals) is today an exclusive commodity. Simpson's statement draws attention to the fact that ritual service was not as expensive in the past. In the past most of the ritual cost was spent on treats for neighbours and friends. Today many of my informants are well paid and well off. Also, most of them are not dependent only on the income from their jobs as ritualists to support their families. Their families often run a dance school in the neighbourhood and most of them are farmers with small or medium sized estates. A few have also invested in property, vans and three-wheelers that they rent out.

Due to the status that has developed in accordance with their work as "traditional dancers", the Aduras have risen from the lowest social status given them during the times when an Adura was just a priest; a ritualist "who held conversations with Yakku". The recognition of Tovils as part of Buddhist heritage and as a ritual practice that serves overarching Buddhist

goals, has led to a new social role and status of the Bereva collective. The communal abandonment of the caste duty over what I understand was two generations up to 1995, also led to a dramatic reduction in the number of skilled practitioners, giving the remaining ones a genuinely exclusive position.

7.7 The Dialectics of Creative Innovation and the "Tovil system"

Debord (1967) discusses "innovation" stating that: "The struggle between tradition and innovation, which is the basic principle of the internal development of the culture of historical societies, is predicated entirely on the permanent victory of innovation." (Debord 1967, #181). Debord's view on cultural development is shared with Pani Bharatha who was a professional artist during the last century, an artist constantly negotiating his role as a "traditional dancer" of the up-country tradition and his position within the field of "stage dance" in Sri Lanka. As he said: "The old traditions die off, all traditions will die – but new ones will evolve." The sort of innovation that Debord has in mind is one with the potential of artistic/cultural revolution – a "revolution" which he sees as fundamental for cultural development. The degree of cultural change which Debord addresses is thus different from Pani Bharata's position, as he points to minor variations of expression, contents and forms in a "traditional", "classical" and "conventional" aesthetic practice such as the "up-country dance". The changes addressed by him concerned skills and context of performance, not revolutionary change in the aesthetic regime. The electronic revolution in the visual arts helps the dancers to create visual effects but does not change the kinaesthetic possibilities of the human body. The need for "innovative space" in the teaching of "classical traditions", was nonetheless recognised and was of concern for the staff at Alfred Crescent. To meet the need for a more "organic approach" in the training of the art-forms, they introduced classes in "new creations" ; drumming, dancing and dance/drama. In the second national drama/dance competition arranged in 2003, all of the productions were "new creations". In the national dance competitions there is a separate class for "new creations" where the innovative use and standards of the Lankan "classical dance forms" are honoured. The speaker at the dance/drama competition in 2003 joked about the need for establishing a separate competition for "television dancing". Pani Bharata, however, discredited the work of many contemporary dancers when he claimed that: "It is only my son-in-law who does this kind of thing now in Sri Lanka. Who is improving the traditional dance form? He has

used basic techniques to develop modern dance successfully and goes on international tours with his company productions. I am not against preserving the old art in order to improve it into modern art in the way that my son-in-law has done. He does not represent the distortion of the traditional dance forms as many others do. My son-in-law has kept the original dancing techniques and improved them successfully in a modern way." Again, Nurnberger (1998) is the specialist on stage dance and not I, but I have seen some modern performances and can confirm that many contemporary choreographers innovate on the dance figures and movement using texts of local traditional dance. In comparison, the opportunity for artistic innovation in the Tovil situation is the greatest in relation with the comedy dialogue between the drummer and the Aduras which there are many openings for throughout the day- and night-long rituals. There are further opportunities in relation to the costumes, the scripts of songs, jokes, poses and figures individually developed by the Aduras for the Mask appearance acts. There are also openings for the development of individual "acrobatic" acts and innovative dance-patterns in accordance with the "calling" and "pleading" songs.

Ritual procedures and themes, as my Rata Yakuma case from chapters 4- 5 illustrates, have evidently been created and innovated upon many times throughout history. So have the purposes the rites are designed to serve. Hence, great changes have taken place in the "Tovil system" throughout the last two centuries. The historical/political context, the historical characters and kinds of events that the "Tovil system" takes as its point of reference are in continual change. The "Tovil system" has throughout its history fused the knowledge of natural phenomena and beings, social systems, history and persons, of the elements, metaphysics, the movement of the planets, the plants, the flowers, the foods and every thing appreciated and useful for the Lankans. The "architects" of the Tovils have blended the features of nature, metaphysics, the human body and mental states and expressions – and very much more, in the ritual design. For instance the Sanni mask used in the Sanni Yakuma rite is very similar to the shapes of creatures appearing in the shadows of a leaf tree at dark. The Yaka are, among other things, known as tree spirits. The system is modern in the sense that it is modelled on esoteric religious and metaphysical texts and preserves a rich classificatory knowledge in many fields. Particularly impressive is the knowledge of plants included in the "offering menu", which the hosts have to provide for the rituals. The system

serves many pragmatic ends, and today rites are put together with the aim of curing the patient, restoring the balance of bodily substances, counteracting sorcery, changing the luck of a person or a village community, or bringing about good harvests and crops.

The grand Tovil rituals are put together by many offering sequences to supernaturals that inspired separate cults in the past. For instance, the offering to the Mangara god, which is included in many of the Tovils makes reference to a cult of twelve gods. Obeyesekere (1984) shows that the twelve gods refers to a group of twelve kings of the past. In my interpretation, the number twelve relates to the twelve months of the year and relates the twelve kings to the cult of planet gods. The offering for Mangara is today obligatory in the curing rite Mahasona Samayama and the harvesting rite Gamaduva. Bruce Kapferer suggested that the symbolic killing of the cock as a conclusion of the offering sequence to Mangara could imply that it was once designed as a hunting rite for kings. The Mangara god is nonetheless a buffalo god, and was once very important for people in pastoral villages. His most important shrine, an old "milk tree" is located in Usangoda near Ranne in the southern province, a place with ancient pastoral settlements. This area is also a part of the Ruhunu Kingdom, where the mythological giant reborn as Mahasona once served as a warrior for the king. The "Tovil system" thereby works in the same mimetic way as the ritual world of the Egyptians where gods were the imitations of kings, the kings were imitations of the powers of sacred animals, the pyramids were imitations of star constellations etc.

The rite which the Kandyan dancers once were so proud of knowing, the Kohombe kankariya, was, according to the late Pani Bharata, impossible to perform as the last generation of professional ceremonial masters who knew every bit of the 30-hour long rite had died out. Susan Reed (2002) draws attention to the fact that the main reason for the disintegration of the rite was that the "supernaturals" which the rite addressed, no longer took an actual position in the local Buddhist pantheon. In the "low-country" tradition a few grand Tovils share the destiny of the Kohombe-Kankariya cult. For instance, the Gara Yakuma rite for fishing luck is very rarely performed – and the Aduras I have seen in performance only knew the basics, and had serious trouble following the grand senior Adura leading the performance of the dance items and songs exclusively performed in this rite. The same was true at the Deva Tovil at the Dondra temple festival in 1999. The Maha-Kalu

Kumare Samayama is a ritual that I have seen performed for show only once. It is not performed as a curing rite any more, at least not in the Matara district where I worked. The difference in the repertoire of "pidenis", the small offering ceremonies, which the Aduras obtained information about through ritual texts and what they actually perform are great. Moreover, the cases of illness or misfortune that the Tovils were supposed to cure are still afflicting the locals. So the change concerns the variation and the duration of the "ritual cure" that the Aduras prescribe. There is also strong competition from other "doctors" and "priests" who offer alternative cures to the rites. Despite these tendencies many rituals are nonetheless still performed in the form and order of ritual procedures that they have probably had for many generations of Aduras, but of course with some artistic freedom of improvisation involved as well as differences in ritual procedures performed by different "clans" of ritualists.

7.8 Concluding Remarks

The Tovils can be regarded as either a form of aesthetic practice from the viewpoint of a modern class cultural production perspective – as influenced by Bourdieu (1993, 1984) – or as high or popular culture, but in my view the system belongs to the latter. This is because "high culture" in the Sri Lankan context is connected with the teaching of Buddhist doctrines and the religious practice orchestrated by the Buddhist clergy. With Ames (1964), as discussed in the introduction, the "Tovil system" stands out in this relation as a "folkloric" fusion of a variety of religious ritual traditions, and deals with the "mundane" sphere of humans and their "domestic" supernaturals. The Buddhist doctrine directs the transcendental transgression from the mundane sphere (from laukika to lokottara). The scriptures studied by local monks have in fact been copied down for more than two millennia in their "original" form. So Buddhism is "high culture" both because of its transcendental orientation – focus on mental capacities and rejection of the physical aspects of life – and because of its ancient line of practitioners. The controversy between the "this worldliness" of religious cults, including Hindu gods, and Buddhist doctrinal practice on the other hand, is therefore one which creates many interesting paradoxes in Sri Lankan religious culture. Cults of worship of gods at temples and Tovil rituals are mundane matters in comparison with the "transcendental" Buddhism "proper". The change that has taken place – which in regard to "High" Buddhism is one of significant transformation – is that the Tovils in their conventional form and fields of practice, have become recognised by the Buddhist clergy as a ritual practice that works towards "lokottara" matters – through the capacity of their aesthetic dynamics to "balancing the mind". Or perhaps if one looks on the flip side of things, the work reveals a tendency for the monks to be orientated towards matters of this world (laukika). One way or the other, the Tovils did not have this status in the sixties (Ames 1962), and during my fieldwork in 1996, the presence of monks at rites was still very uncommon and it was commented on if they graced the rites with their presence. In other words, there are two social movements taking place within the "Tovil system": one where parts of the ritual system have found new territories of operation within the field of popular culture. On the other hand, the Tovils in their "conventional" forms and fields of practice, have moved up in the religious ritual ladder, towards the "sphere of high culture", and aspire to become "agama" (ritual practice with transcendental preparatory potential) as the system has become recognised by the clergy as "Buddhist". My findings in regard to

cultural policy programs indicate that Lankan Buddhism has moved from a "protestant phase" as argued for by Gombrich and Obeyesekere, into one of capitalist commodity and national state branding, with its public forms transformed into spectacles serving politics, and the local and the international tourist industry. I will argue that in the new contexts, "Tovil dance" does not "lose" its origin, nor its ethical dimension, but it does change its purpose. It is my view that the key to why religion and arts continue to be interrelated despite the entertaining ends of ceremonial dance in many situations, is as simple as the fact that as Lankan subjects are religious, the majority acknowledge the origin and ethical dimension of "Tovil dance" in any situation due to its ontological signification – its mode of existence.

The "Tovil system" has evidently proved to have transformative capacities and has not moved out of the field of "popular" Buddhist culture but continues to be a ritual system which constitutes and negotiates social Buddhist identity. On the social level, the liberal policies since 1977 in particular have created a social situation where the old caste status regime competes with cultural and economic capital – the social class system. With capitalism, new markets for "Tovil dance" have appeared, and today the "Tovil dance" is not performed only in the Tovils, but also at local and tourist shows. The local "classical dance traditions" are no longer restricted to ritual or ceremonial work, but are subject to creative innovation by artists and directors of the contemporary stage as shown by our example from Chapter 3, the play "the Ritual". Politicians have also used the ceremonial "Tovil drum and dance" innovatively and created a great range of public ceremonies in honour of themselves and other esteemed persons. Another invention is the common participation of dancers in temple processions (peraheras).

The establishment of the new teaching institutions has created a major change in both the cultural and social dimensions of the rites. At the start at what became the Institute of Aesthetic studies, the teachers gave practical training in standardised dance and drumming acts of the up-country tradition but from the nineties all traditions were included. Simultaneously they started to give classes in improvisation and creative development of new drum and dance pieces as if they had accepted Debord's claim that innovation is important for all traditions if they are to survive. The institute shows that it has managed to establish

itself as a faculty of arts that no longer just intends to teach traditional dance, but has a mission for artistic development. The "classical dance" of the "Tovil system" is today a symbol for Sinhalese culture – their national "movement". The Aduras and their Tovils are still in an elite division in regard to the level of performance of traditional pieces, the artistic skills and creativity of expression of the dancers, and the complexity of aesthetics (the form and feeling aspect) in the modern dance productions, However, with the great pool of dancers in Sri Lanka and the common interest in dance, the actors on the modern stage have a great chance to develop brilliant productions. As for the future of the rites of the Aduras: well, they have taken interest in the task of training another generation of specialists, at least in the south, and there is a great demand for their services – so the ritual arts of the "Tovil system" are definitively "safe" for the time being!

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Inspired by the work of Don Handelman (1990 (1998)), I aimed from the beginning to make a contribution to the direction of anthropology that concerns the study of "performative events". During fieldwork I consequently documented multiple cultural performances where the Aduras played a part and in which "Tovil dance" was included as a performance element. The cases of "the Ritual", "the Big Girl Become" ritual, the Rata Yakuma, "the Celebration of the Minister" and the preliminary ritual for the "National dance festival" have been examined in detail. I put much effort into the study of the ideography of the Rata Yakuma rite and the documentation of the ritual procedures in particular. In existing records of ethnographic studies of the "Tovil system" no one had previously looked into this ritual in detail and I was afraid the rite was vanishing and that it was about to share the destiny of the more elaborate fertility rite Maha Kalu Kumare Samayama and the Kohombe Kankariya, which are not performed anymore. The documentation of the Rata Yakuma rite is therefore the most important ethnographic contribution in this thesis. To research the practice of performing and making rituals, ceremonies, theatre plays and other genres of cultural performances and cultural policy, cultural institutions and programs is perhaps not a common perspective in anthropological studies where the public and subjective response to such activities are what are most often considered in analysis. Traditionally, "the social" and "the political" are investigated through research on organising structures and ideography of performative events and the public response to these. In this work I have put together a new "cultural map" by emphasising the wider cultural context with which the "Tovil system" co-exists in the realms of expressions of religious worlds in popular culture where the cultural dimension is given preference over the religious even though I argue that the religious and cultural are inseparable in this context. It is my hope that this may inspire other researchers to look into how people actually relate to the "Tovil system" today, to consider the features and traits of its contemporary audience community / communities, and investigate more closely the many social and political aspects of its contemporary status.

I have aimed to address the complexity involved in the study of cultural performances, and show that such performances employ a great variety of concepts and that the aesthetic dimension of such performances is crucial for its constituting capacities of engaging our "sensus communis" which to Ranciere, as I said in the introductory chapter, is the premise

for the existence of social worlds. It is also my hope that I have managed to demonstrate why the idea of concept can help in making a sound analysis of how to study changes in the field of cultural performances but also in understanding why cultural performances become integrated parts of our social worlds and are able to effect, constitute, and transform our cultural ethos. Cultural performances in practice serve an end/function in that they involve aesthetic technologies in their creations and have some conceptual ideography that gives directions for and structures the event, illustrating how the event becomes perceived as meaningful for us. As an aesthetic regime, "Tovil dance" is distinctive and complex, and its "meaning" is imagined by the audience. What these imageries are depends, as the case of "the Ritual" showed, on the discursive "ideography" of distinctive audience communities. Although I had researched the mythology of Kalu Kumare for some years for instance, I did not recognise that a dance/drama piece performed on the annual dance/drama festival at John deSilva narrated the birth story of Kalu Kumare. In other words, the ideographic imagery with which one perceives an artwork becomes its meaning. Moreover, my cases provide evidence that there is a continuation between the ancient interrelation between power regimes, cultural-practices/arts and (Buddhist) religion. The public identification of "Tovil dance" as "Buddhist intangible heritage" and its value for the "Buddhist nationalists" as such has been an important force in the process towards "Tovil dance" attaining its current position in Sri Lankan culture. That "Tovil dance" is very popular is certain, and at a lecture that I gave in Oslo in August 2009 a Tamil theatre director from Batticaloa, a town in the north-eastern province of Sri Lanka, who was present, told me that Tamils living in his province had started to take classes in "Tovil dance". He believed that this new interest in and popularity of "Tovil dance" in his community, was an effect of the many television programs showing Tovil rituals and "Tovil dance". I cannot help but believe that the people who, at the time of writing, are living in the post civil war territory of the "north-east province" where the Tamil tigers quite recently lost their battle for political autonomy, have subordinated themselves to the "Buddhist Sinhalese" majority and are about to learn a kinaesthetic language of the hegemonic Sri Lankan culture and its subjects, and as result will become tuned into the "heterogeneous mode of existence" of the Sri Lankan majority. Cultural policy, as my work has shown, has a powerful agency in the formation of the cultural ethos that people take their phenomenal existence within as it concerns the "distribution" of the aesthetic regimes through which we express, perceive and constitute

our worlds. As I discussed in chapter 6, the language and dance policy of the post-colonial governments in Sri Lanka has proved highly efficient in regard to securing the Buddhist Sinhalese a hegemonic position in the Social Democratic Republic of Sri Lanka. In this context, that Tamils are learning "Tovil dance" becomes both a political and social statement.

The many "snap shots" that I present in the first chapter were put together long after I had returned home from fieldwork. The material nonetheless pointed out the direction for the rest of the thesis as it made it crystal clear that the aesthetics of popular culture in Sri Lanka are inseparable from the religious ethos. Fine arts in Sri Lanka have divine origin, and "every" Lankan is a religious subject in phenomenal interaction with the beings of the Buddhist cosmography (of laukika) in their daily lives, and the majority acknowledge the religious origin and ethical dimension of art forms like "Tovil dance", due to its ontological signification of creation and its mode of existence. Thus, the common disciplinary and analytical distinction between fine arts, culture and religion did not come across as sound in the Lankan context. As mentioned in the thesis, Ranciere distinguishes between "religious arts" and "the fine arts" (2004) and suggests that religion forms ethical regimes of arts, and that as religious representations artworks have simultaneously an origin, an end and a purpose. In my view all cultural performances and aesthetic creations serve an end, whether just on an aesthetic level, such as providing pure entertainment, or by bringing about aesthetic excess or "sublime" features in their creation. As artworks exist in social worlds they necessarily come with ethical aspects. Even though ethics does not come across as the dominating "concept" of the work, the work is ethically perceived. The significant feature of religious aesthetic creations is, in my view, the ontological continuity they retain with their origin and their purposes, the dimension of pragmatic instrumentality. Ranciere's definition therefore applied firmly to our case of the "Tovil system" since all "tools" (songs, drums, demon pipe, igaha, limes, betel leaves, cloths, dance, etc.) as well as the different Tovil rites have a "supernatural" origin and come out as "original" and "complete" in their design and expression (Larsen, 1998). The religious art works serve defined purposes to the extent that the "human imagery", a directed intentional agency invested in its creation or enactment does so. By looking into the concept of "popular culture" through the work of Fiske (1989) it also became evident that "Buddhist culture" and its many dimensions and facets holds a

hegemonic position in Sri Lanka, but is nonetheless a "subculture" in the South Asian and global context. I found that the "Tovil system", has through the centuries held a high position in the field of "popular Buddhist culture". It is qualitatively different from "folk culture" which is transmitted informally and operates outside established social institutions and does not come with standardised features (Fiske, 1989). In other words, the common anthropological study of the "modernisation of folkloric aesthetics" does not apply to the process that the "Tovil system" has been subjected to as, in my view, on the basis of these criteria it has "always" been modern. This work has proved that the interrelationship between the system and power centres is ancient and intact and that the interest invested by kings, village headmen and the public authorities in the system as an "aesthetic regime" has continued. On the systemic level new institutions for the preservation and the promotion of "Tovil dance" have evolved and changed the distribution of the art form and deployment of "Tovil dance" in cultural performance. As a result of the public interest in the system, its position as a Buddhist aesthetic regime has, as I argued in chapter 7, become exceedingly important both in popular culture as well as in the religious sphere where it aspires towards a position as "agama" – a ritual practice serving noble lokattara ends. The social status of the Aduras who can work as "traditional dancers" (and drummers) in addition to their ritual performances, is also on the rise.

In a publication by K.M. Vatsyayan, a dancer and intellectual, entitled: "Some aspects of cultural policies in India" (1972) she identifies two traits: firstly there is a tendency towards; "cultivation of the self", and secondly there is a need of "continual communication". In her view, culture thus ultimately serves religious ends, as the cultivation of the self is a key objective for the Indian subject. Religion in general provides "paths" for the realisation of salvation. As she writes: "A cultivation of the self was both for individual harmony, equanimity and tranquillity and for the ends of social and moral right. Only the disciplined cultivated man, fully in control of his body, emotions and mind, could hope to strive for spiritual salvation and be capable of facing the challenge of the life of action: in his immediate spatial environment, it was believed that one could aspire to and achieve a state of release, a beatitude here and now, and not in a birth hereafter: it was for the individual to will and work for it" (Ibid., 1972: 10). Methods she mentions through which such ends could be reached are yoga (meditation and asceticism), yayna (religious sacrifice) and sadhana (spiritual

practice). The second trait is: "The forms which emerged and of which there is an abundance of literary, archaeological and sculptural evidence, speak of cultural development where successive waves of different civilizations and influences and even invasions acted only to enrich the fundamental tradition. Influences, borrowings, impressions - all fell into a distinct Indian pattern, adhering to some fundamentals, but having the capacity to assimilate, synthesize, to grow continually and evolve new patterns, always, however, with an unmistaken Indian identity" (Ibid., 1972: 11). In this work I considered the importance of religious practice among Sri Lankan Buddhists and the distinction made between those serving laukika aims or lokottara goals, and it is my finding that the features of the cultural policy tendencies detected by Vatsyayan for India hold true in Sri Lanka as well. This is because, as with the religious orientations, in Sri Lanka as in India, the concepts, shapes, expression and narratives of the "Great traditions", such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Mahabharata and Ramayana and the Buddhist dharma (doctrine) serve as ideography for the development of contemporary culture. The continuation of the "core point of reference" in regard to the Tovil rituals in performance, make them appear as eternal and as original as in the first performance. The variations and changes in the repertoire happen, and happen in a time/space compression endlessly. For instance, when investigating the many cultural practices related to the "Rata Yakuma" ritual I found, as mentioned, a handful of key concepts operating in many cultural practices that are interrelated with the Rata Yakuma rite. The wider conceptual inspirations and influences on the historical development of the ritual were addressed in chapter 4. In the medieval era, Buddha was in fact sometimes written into the ritual texts of the whole "Tovil system", replacing the Hindu gods Iswara/ Brakma, Shiva and Vishnu as the divine superiors of the pantheon. Moreover, the texts were translated from Sanskrit, Pali, Telegu, Tamil, Mayalam and other Indian languages into Sinhala. It is commonly known that a monk named Totugamuva Rahula Hamuduru translated all the texts. The story has it that by accident, the monk had taken an overdose of a magic memory potion and was thus enabled to do this otherwise impossible job. In my understanding, the notion of the magical agency involved in the translator's powers as well as his noble status as a monk, is essential for these documents to maintain their continuous status as potent (Buddhists) ritual texts. Nonetheless, original ancient mantra/yantra charms are regarded as the most potent and precious possession for the "charmer". In other words, my research on the Rata Yakuma ritual in particular, supports Vatsayan's view on the

dialectical quality of cultural production in India, where some key idioms continue to take a position as key points of reference for the works. The chapter on the theatre play "the Ritual" demonstrates this point most clearly as an example of the many "new" deployments of "Tovil dance" in cultural performances. In this regard I also want to mention that in the span of two days in Oslo I had the chance to see the productions of a contemporary ballet company, "Sadhya" led by Santosh Nair, and a lecture by the neo avant-garde arts collective, "Rags Media Collective". These companies are both located in New Delhi. Of interest here is that both companies created works on the basis of concepts from the Mahabharata. This fact proves that contemporary artists also invest their time and skills in exploring concepts and artistic expressions of the great South Asian traditions. On the level of cultural policy, it is my finding that Sri Lankan politicians joined the Indian trend and that the cultivation of the self and continuation of "traditions" were prioritised in post-colonial cultural policy programs. It is also my finding that in 2003, the reallocation of cultural policy bodies - the new mission of the Ministry of culture - showed a tendency towards creating a separation between religious and cultural policies. However, the consequences of this move are still to be seen.

The short answer to the guiding questions of this thesis:
"What is it about "Tovil dance" as an art form, the Aduras as "ritualists" and "artists", and the conceptual and aesthetic compositional structure of the "Tovil system" and its power dimension that enables such a successful mediation between the multiple arenas of performance of "Tovil dance", and that has allowed the ritual practice to continue through millennia, unaffected by the vicissitudes of history?" is:

"Tovil dance" as an art form, an aesthetic regime, played a part in the many cultural performances addressed in this work due to its position in Sri Lankan society as representing the cultural heritage of the Buddhist Sinhalese, but also due to its popularity and wide distribution through public cultural institutions and because "Tovil dance" is a distinguished and interesting art-form to be explored by the artist as well as to be perceived by the audience. The Aduras are outstanding performers. They are an athletic and artistic elite in regard to the performance of "Tovil dance" skills that they have developed through their demanding work as ritualists. In contemporary society the artistic achievements of the Aduras are honoured by the state, and the "aesthetic regime of Tovils" "occupies new

territories" in the field of popular culture, while the "magic department" of the system has not achieved the same public status. In the social/political sphere the reason for this is obvious as the kinaesthetic regime of "Tovil dance" is a powerful media through which the "sensus communis" evolves due to its capacity in performance of bringing about "joy" and "balanced minds", while the "mantra language" of the "magic department" engages with powerful supernaturals able to interfere with the social and the political in a destructive manner. The "Tovil system" is, as has been shown, highly flexible on "its plane of composition"; a Tovil rite is a bricolage of "items" composed at diverse moments of history and put together in order to serve various religious, subjective, communal/social, political and economic ends. That "Tovil dance" items are performed in new arenas is thus in accordance with established practice. Whether these new "cultural performances" will become integrated into the "Tovil system" in the future is impossible to say, but with the history of the system in mind, it is highly possible.

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GLOSSARY

Adav	Short dances in God's honour
Adura	Ritualist of the Tovil system
Agama	Religion
Ahasa	Sky
Ahimsa	Non violence
Aiboweva	Long life
Aile	Offering plate
Akusala	Unethical
Alu yama	Morning Watch
Ambun Kavi	Songs which describe the origin and making of the ritual buildings, offering baskets etc.
Amma	Mother
Anduna	Soot/oil mixture for the face
Anguru	Earthen pot containing burning coal and resin
Anukaraneya	Imitation
Apaya/narakaya	Hell
Apriisiduwi	Pollution
Araksa mantra	Protective mantra
Araksa nula	Protective tread (In general)
Araksa	Protection
Arudhaya	A devoted person
Arupaloka	World of non form
Asirivada	A short version of songs
Ata cona	The eight cardinal directions
Ata paliya	The eight paliyas (procession of eight)
Ata	Eight
Atul	Inner emotion/state
aturea pandala	The Patient's bed
aturea	Patient
Avatara	Manifestation of the supernaturals
Avatara balima	Seeing the avatara of the demon act
Avesa	Demon trance (patient in)
Avija	Ignorance
Baba	Baby
Bali	Clay image
Bandaras	Territorial demon/gods
Bara	Wow (to the supernaturals)
Basne ira	West

Baya	Fear or fright
Bayawella	Sudden fear
Belma	Look (glance)
Bera	Ceremonial drum used in Tovil
Bera pade	Dancing rhythm
Bera tala	Drum rhythm
Bere kariya	Drummer
Bereva	Drummer caste
Bhava	Emotion
Bhavanaya	Meditation
Bhikku	Buddhist monk
Bhuta vidiya	Spirit science
Billa	Living sacrifice (i.e. a cock)
Boruveda	Trick
Budhuguna	Enlightenment
Bulat	Betel leaf
Butha	The element of earth
Buthe/Bahirevas	Earth spirits
Cetana	Intentionality
Daha Ata Sanni	The eighteen Sanni demons
Dakshjø	Wise
Dane	Meritful giving
Darako pattiye	Child delivery
Daru mav	Child/mother act
Daule tammetama	Drumming
Dauwla	Ritual drum
Dekano willaku	Double sided torch
Dekkuna palat sanskruthika amati angsjøja	Southern Province Council Cultural Department
Dekkuna	South
Dennewa	Give or hand over
Depavila	Human sacrifice trick
Deraheva	Death bed
Deshiya kalava	Local Arts
Desja paleniya	National politics
Deva/Devaya	God
Devale	Shrine
Devata	Godling/Demon god
Devi	Goddess
Dhamma	Teachings of Gotama Buddha
Disti bandima	To bind disti of the Yakku

Disti	Pollutive substance from Yakku
Djivan kirima	Breathe life into (offerings)
Dolla duka	Pregnancy craving
Dolle	Pleading
Domanassa	Sadness
Domanassa	Unpleasant
Dosa	Misfortune
Dukkha	Suffering
Dumalla	Resin
Durava	Toddy tapper caste
Epa nula	Protective thread (diagnosis)
Gåliya	Student in the Tovil system
Gandha	Smell
Gauroweia	Respect
Gire	Arecanut cracker
Goigama	Farmer caste
Guru musti	Teacher secrets
Gurukulle	Genealogy of teachers
Gurunanse	Teacher in the Tovil system
Hængime	Feelings
Hakami	Land workers caste
Hambass	Clay from the teremite's hive
Hamoda band	Army dance troupe
Haramba	Dance exercise
Harry vidiyata	Correct way (ritual performance)
Haskam	Divine acts
Hatt pelle paliya	The procession of seven offerings
Hena	Washer caste
Hende pideni	Evening offerings
Hinnaa wenne	Laughing
Hitte mawagannewa	Imagining
Hitte pirisinduwi	Purify the mind
Igaha	The ritual stick, in general arrow
Ile	Small offering plate
Indriya	Perception
Ira modum	Noon
Irisiawa	Jealousy
Jataka	Myths concerning Buddhas' life

Kahadiyara	Saffron water
Kala yatana	Dance school
Kalava	Arts
Kalayatana hipati	Authorised teacher at dancing schools
Kalla bawene	Art school
Kallas	Earth (substance)
Kamaloka	World of sense
Kannalauva	Pleading verses
Kansava	Anxious
Kapporo	Camphor cube
Kapu	Cotton
Kapurala	Temple priest
Karakkawilla	Dizzy
Karava	Fishermen's caste
Kariya	Man
Karuna	Compassion
Kavi	Song
Keli	Performance
Killa dannewa	Pollution hitting, dumalla on fire
Killi	Impure substance
Killitoi	Impure (things)
Kiri gasse	Milk tree
Kiriamma varon	Milk mothers/maids
Kokula	Cock
Kovil	Garden temple
Lache	Female aspect of dance
Lankapalas	Guardian deities
laukika	Worlds of this world
Le apirisiduwima	Pollution caused by blood
Loka	World
lokottara	World beyond this world(s)
Maduyama	Midnight
Mætti	Clay for the bali image
Maha Chari	Senior Adura
Maha samayama	Midnight watch
Maha yatikava	Myth of origin
Mal	Flower
Mal maduve	Flower shed
Malavara dosa	Puberty illness
Malpelle	Plants

Manesikka truptiya	Mental satisfaction
Manesse pirisinduwi	Balanced mind
Mangul bere	Ceremonial drumbeat
Manjestri	Divine experience
Mantra (sound of form)	Charms
Mantra kariya	Adura specialised in mantra
Mataka	Memory
Maya	Illusion
Mono	Mask (face)
Mono vidiyava	Psychology
Næggene ira	East
Namaskaraya	Prayer which gives gods honour
Namaste	Salutation to gods
Nanomora	Protective oil
Naraka vada	Evil work/Bad deeds
Natemaya	Drama master
Natung kandayemø	Dance troupe
Natung kariya	Dancer
Natya/Natuma Natung/Natannemo	Dance
Nibbana	Nirvana
Nikaya	Buddhist Monastery
Nindagam	Kings land given to individuals
Nula	Thread
Oturø	North
Pade	Dancing steps
Padure	Mat
Panca bhuta	Elements (five)
Panca kama guna	Senses (five)
Pandam	Torch
Panna	Wisdom
Paranparava	Teacher genealogy
Pau	Sorrow
Pe bath	Consecrated rice
Pelle paliya	Procession
Pena	Fortune teller
Perahera	Temple procession
Pideni	Offering
Pidenna	Gift between people and evil spirits
Pillu	Pollutive substance from people with disti
Pilli	Substantial impurity caused by "disti" affecting a persons own karma

Pirisindu	Purify
Pirisinduwi	Purified (ritually)
Pirit	Buddhist prayer
Pitta	Bile (humour)
Pittewaralle	Long straws used as hair for the Aduras costume
Pol geddie	Coconut stick
Pollu mahikanthe	Earth goddess
Polluto	Feather
Porale	Graveyard
Poraworte	Origin
Posthe kale	Ola leaf book
Prekshje keiyo	Audience
Pretea	Ghosts
Puja	Gift between people and gods
Rajakaraya	King servant system
Ranga mandele	Dance space
Rangabande	Instruments (playing)
Rasa	Taste
Roga lakshene (illness signs)	Diagnosis
Rupe/mortiya	Image of gods
Rupaloka	World of form
Sabdha	Sound
Sabdhaya	Sound of speech /speech
Særasili	Decoration
Sahatike	Diploma
Sakalpaneya	Imagination
Sakti	Female potency
Salagama	Cinnamon peeler caste
Sallue	Shawl
Samadhi	Concentration
Samanassa	Pleasing
Sambande taveya	Cosmology
Samsara	The cycle of rebirth
Sandayama	Evening
Sandesesaya	Message (from the gods)
Sandiye rudjava	Pains in joints
Sandon	Saffron
Sangha	Buddhist order of priests
Sanskruthika ammati	Culture politics
Sanskruthika Madjastani	Culture Centre
Sanskruthika sandarsena	Culture show

Sanskruthika	Culture
Sanskrutikha sandarsena	Traditional culture
Sardhava	Trust
Sariyama padenissa	Music
Sarvodeya	Stage/Concert hall
Satiya	Truth
Saundaraiya Vishwe Vidiyalelya	Institute of Aesthetic Studies
Saundariya adeyapaneya	Aesthetics
Sema	Phlegm (humour)
Shanti karmaya	Rites of blessing
Siddhante	Theory
Sihiya nati veneva	Fainting
Sirisipade	Head to foot verse
Sissiya	Student male
Sissiyawi	Student female
Sissjatwa	Scholarship
Situvam	Temple paintings
Somanassa	Joy
Sparsa	Touch/feeling
Subbha alut aurodak veva	Happy New Year
Subbha nataka	Auspicious time
Sukha	Wellbeing
Swabhasa	Mother tongue
Tagga	Gift between people
Tala	Rhythm
Tandu/Baratto	The masculine aspect of dance
Tanha	Craving/desire
Taroka	Star (in the sky)
Tarraha	Angry
Tatoe	Offering stand
Tel	Oil
Tibbhona	Exhibition
Tithaniya	Rhythmic structure
Torana	Offering pedestal
Truptiya	Satisfaction
Tundos	Faults in the three bodily humours
Upaaya/Upayaak	Politics
Upaya	Techniques
Upete kavi	Songs of origin
Varanan	Permission, warrant, authorisation

Vas kam	Sorcery
Vasdanda	Demon pipe
Vat pilivet	Healing
Vidiya (road)	Offering structure
Vidiyava	Science
Vihara	Buddhist temple
Villakku	Fire stick
Wanda gæni	Childless woman (no result woman)
Wata	Wind (bodily humour)
Yadini kavi	Songs of origin and deeds
Yak Adura	He who removes demons
Yak Dessa	He who holds discourse with demons
Yaka/Yaksini – Yakku	Malevolent spirit /demon
Yaksa dosa	Illness caused by Yakku/disti
Yantra (form of sound)	Magic diagrams
Yuddha	War